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## UNIT 13 RISE OF FASCISM AND NAZISM\*

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### Structure

- 13.0 Objectives
- 13.1 Introduction
- 13.2 General Features of Fascism
- 13.3 Foundation of Fascist State in Italy
  - 13.3.1 The Emergence of Fascist Movement and Conquest of Power
  - 13.3.2 Consolidation of the Regime
  - 13.3.3 Major Types of Fascist Mass Organizations
  - 13.4.4 Nature of the Fascist State
  - 13.4.5 The Fall and Solo Republic
- 13.4 Fascism in Different Parts of Europe
- 13.5 Formation of the Nazi Party in Germany
- 13.6 The Crisis of the Parliamentary Republic
- 13.7 State and Society in the Third Reich
- 13.8 Let Us Sum Up
- 13.9 Answers to Check Your Progress Exercises

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### 13.0 OBJECTIVES

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In earlier Units you have been introduced to two major ideological trends in Europe i.e. liberal democracy and socialist world. This Unit introduces you to the development of extreme right wing movements and regimes in the Inter-War period in Europe in the form of fascism and nazism. After reading this Unit, you will be able to explain:

- some general features of fascism and the nature of its mobilization;
- the ideological forms and the organizational style of fascism in various countries of Europe;
- nature of fascist regimes in countries like Italy and Spain;
- historical antecedents to the rise of fascism in Germany;
- the formation of Nazi party; and
- the changes that came about in the German society after the Nazi takeover;

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### 13.1 INTRODUCTION

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It is important to bear in mind the growth of politics of mobilization of people institutionalized through elections, parties and representation in 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries. This led to a whole range of political choices from left to right. The latent social cleavages also came into open. The growth of monopoly capitalism and resultant intense imperialist rivalries fuelling extreme nationalist ideologies and militarism after 1870 should also be seen as the background of the growth of right-wings fascist dictatorships in Europe after the first phase of World War I.

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In this new context, appeal for political support was made on the basis of new, seemingly non-class identities especially outside the workplace. As a result, unique mass-constituencies such as 'war-veterans', 'tax-payers', 'sports fans' or simply 'national citizens' were created. In the previous Units you learnt about the triple ideological division of Europe into regime of left, right and centre, in the post-war period. You were also familiarized with the 'centre', i.e., the liberal democratic regimes of Britain, France and Germany in the 1920s and the socialist government in Russia. This Unit focuses on the 'right', i.e., the fascist movements and regimes primarily in countries like Italy, Germany (in the 1930s and early 1940s under Hitler) and Spain. The Unit begins with a discussion on some of the general features of fascism. It then takes up the story of fascism in specific countries except Germany where fascist ideology led to the formation of Nazi party. You will also learn about the fundamental changes that Nazism brought in German state and society.

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## 13.2 GENERAL FEATURES OF FASCISM

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Fascism has been interpreted in multiple ways. Some important interpretations explain it as:

- a violent, dictatorial agent of finance capital — a favourite Marxist position,
- the unique expression of Middle Class Radicalism,
- the product of a cultural and moral breakdown,
- the result of Extreme Neurotic or pathologist impulses,
- the product of the rise of amorphous masses with the breakdown of traditional identities based on kinship, church, guild and residence, etc., and
- a form of Bonapartism or an autonomous authoritarian government independent of specific class-domination.

Many more points may be added to this list. But these multiple interpretations are sufficient to point to the heterogeneous ingredients of fascism. Fascism emerged in Europe as a synthesis of organic nationalism (a belief in the harmonious collectivity of Nation superseding all other forms of human identification) and anti-Marxist socialism. Its organic nationalism accounts for its deep-rooted hostility to inter-nationalism and organization and movements based on internationalism such as communism, freemasonry, the League of Nations, finance capital and the multi-national Jewish community. Fascism emerged as a radical movement based on the rejection of notions of liberalism, democracy and Marxism. The Fascist synthesis symbolized the rejection of a political culture inherited from the Enlightenment and its ideas such as rationalist materialism, individualism and pluralist autonomy. The other major cultural variables of fascism were: activism, vitalism and social-Darwinism. Sorel's philosophy of action was based on intuition, energy and ilan. Its activism was used to mobilize the masses. Social Darwinism believed that people in society compete for survival and only superior groups and races succeed.

Fascism was rooted in the 19<sup>th</sup> century critiques of liberal democracy, parliamentarianism and Marxist socialism. However, it differed from the conservative authoritarian groups. The basis of conservative authoritarianism was generally religious ideology whereas fascism based itself on a new cultural

mystique such as vitalism, non-rationalism or secular neo-idealism. The conservatives invoked traditional legitimacies whereas fascists wanted a radical institutional change.

The war did provide sociological and psychological conditions for the crystallization of Fascism. It revealed the capacity of nationalism in the mobilization of masses and economic resources. It further demonstrated the importance of unity of command, of authority, of moral mobilization and of propaganda in the service of the modern state. After the war, Fascism emerged as a vision of a coherent and reunited people, mobilized on the basis of a whole communal liturgy of songs and torch-light procession, highlighting the cult of physical strength, violence and brutality, its perfect expression being the quasi-sacred figure of the leader-the Duce (as in Italy) or the Fuehrer(as in Germany). The fascist opposition to the democratic-bourgeois institutions and values did not rule out their use of mass, plebiscitary forms of politics, but they opposed the notion of democracy based on respect for pluralism in society, the freedom of the individual and the existence of civil and political liberties. Its attempted mass mobilization featured the militarization of politics, and the use of military insignia and terminology. A party militia was often used to reinforce the sense of nationalism and constant struggle as well as to wipe out opposition. Specifically related to this militarization of political relationship with followers was their extreme stress on the masculine principle or male dominance while espousing an organic view of society. In their organic view of society, the structural relationship of various organs to each other only served to define and delimit their roles, taking precedence over the identities and rights of individuals. The exaltation of youth and the specific tendency towards an authoritarian, charismatic, personal style of command (whether elective or non-elective) were other features related to this militarization of politics.

Another significant feature of fascist ideology was the organization of some kind of regulated, multi-class, integrated national economic structure (variously called national corporatist, national socialist or national syndicalist). The goal of empire or at least a radical change in the nation's relationship with other powers was also a crucial factor.

The growth of fascist ideas, in embryonic form, can be traced to the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. The ideas of corporatism (as a community of' people, of producers free from class strife) emerged in reaction to individualism, social atomization and new centralizing states. Initially, it was a residue of the feudal ideology of a mystical 'community' of personal ties. But gradually it acquired modern reformist, class-collaborationist forms. Its two distinct forms were societal corporatism (based on autonomy to corporations) and state corporatism. At the second level, we may discern a tendency from conservatism towards neo-authoritarianism. Action Francaise (founded in 1899 in France) represented this new authoritarian, neo-monarchist nationalism. Its core principle was legitimate and corporate representation. It also made use of anti-semitism and an embryonic militant group of young activists (as a precursor of the fascist militia).

The third trend toward the crystallization of the fascist right was symbolized by an instrumental, modernizing radical right which combined domestic modernization with militant nationalism. Its political manifestation was the Italian National Association founded in 1910. Its ideology of state-corporatism demanded a co-ordination of modern industrial production to make Italy a strong imperial

country and its militia *Sempre Pronti* (Always Ready) countered leftist violence with its own street violence. The other political precursors of radical, semi-collectivist nationalism which anticipated the fascist goal of broader mass mobilization were Paul Deroulede's League of Patriots in France and the Boulangist Movement in France in the 1880s. Pan-Germanism and the racial nationalism of the Austrian leader Georg Ritter von Schenerer in the late 19th century, Maurice Barres socialist-nationalism embodied in the Czech National Socialist Party (1904) and the German National Socialist Workers' Party (DNSAP) and its leaders Dr. Walter Riehl and Rudolff Jung came much closer to the later Hitlerite ideas and programmes.

**Check Your Progress 1**

1) In what way did the war contribute to the development of fascist movement?

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2) What are the general features of fascism?

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3) How would you distinguish a conservative right-wing from fascist movement? Answer in about five sentences.

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**13.3 FOUNDATION OF FASCIST STATE IN ITALY**

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By now you must have acquired a general awareness of the features of fascism. It is now time to do a case study. Italy, Spain and Germany are some of the examples of fascism. Let us now look at the specific form that fascism took in these countries.

### 13.3.1 The Emergence of the Fascist Movement and Conquest of Power

Fascism in Italy was created by the convergence of certain existing trends. The split in the radical syndicalist Confederation of Trade Unions took place in 1914 over the issue of Italian participation in the war. The syndicalist believed in the 'self-emancipation' of the 'producers', which could be achieved through 'regulation at factory level', and not through 'seizure of state power'. The state would be replaced at an appropriate time by worker's syndicates or associations, which would act as the instruments of self-government of the producers. The Syndicalist wing which moved towards fascism embraced extreme nationalism, and nations were described by it as proletarian or plutocratic (i.e., in class terms). The futurists who rejected traditional norms and existing institutions and exalted violence, and were fascinated by speed, power, motors and machines, or all the modern technological possibilities, were a second major ideological factor. Mussolini's socialistic views and ideas on leadership, mass-mobilization and national revolution contributed the third major strand.

The initial programme of fascists, launched as *Fasci di Combattimento* (1919) in Milan called for the installation of a republic and reflected demands for radical democratic and socialistic reforms including confiscation of the huge war-time profits of the capitalists, the suppression of big joint-stock companies and land for the landless peasants. These leftist elements of the programme were dropped in 1920 and only, an emotive mixture of strident patriotism, justification of the war and a concern for national greatness and growing aversion to the socialist party were retained. The growth of fascist squads led by ex-military personnel and supported by the local police and army especially in northern and central Italy — the Po valley and Tuscany — was directly linked to the actual or perceived threat of the left. The Fascist Militia was created in January 1923 by Mussolini in order to discipline the squads and curtail the powers of local squad leaders.

The poorly organized fascist march on Rome (October 1922) suggests that a revolutionary insurrection could not have succeeded but for the indecisiveness of the King and the passive support of a section of army. The King appointed Mussolini as the prime Minister on 29<sup>th</sup> October 1922, who temporarily observed all the constitutional norms after the assumption of power. Mussolini, however, realized that even a multi-class nationalist movement would need a compromise or a coalition of right forces to stay in power. In February 1923, a fusion of Fascist Party and Nationalist Association of Italy (ANI) took place. This fusion with a conservative, elitist, monarchist right — wing became essential to gain broader support among army officers, academics, civil servants and businessmen. This and other steps to seek accommodation with the traditional elites left its imprint on the fascist party and the state. The traditional right groups co-operated with fascists in passing the Acerbo Bill in 1923 which proposed that the party receiving a-quarter of votes in an election, should be automatically two-thirds of seats in the parliament.

### 13.3.2 Consolidation of the Regime

Using force and fraud, Fascists swept the 1924 election and after temporary discomfiture over the murder of Socialist Deputy Matteotti in 1924, Mussolini went ahead with his institutionalization of dictatorship. In October 1926, all opposition parties were banned. The press was shackled, and the Public Safety

Law (1926) made the security of state take precedence over personal liberty. The Syndical Law (1926) brought labour under the control of state, in the interest of production. The law confirmed the fascist unions in their monopoly of negotiations, set up tribunals for compulsory arbitration and banned strikes and go-slows. The Fascist Party itself was bureaucratized. The new party statute in October 1926 introduced rigid centralization of powers, all posts being appointed from above. In 1927, Mussolini resolved the question of the relationship between the party and the state, in favour of the latter. Between 1926 and 1929, over 60,000 squad members were expelled from the party. Attempt was made to control syndicalist ideas among fascist trade unions and Edmondo Rossoni, the leader of syndicalists, was sacked in 1928. The productivist and modernizing goal of early fascism led to a compromise with private capital in the 1920s and 1930s, without formally renouncing syndicalist projects of semi-collectivism. The 'Corporate State' was formally created in 1934 with 22 new combined corporations of employers and employees, but they lacked real powers to take economic decisions.

Mussolini also tried to appease the Church. Large grants were made for the repair of war-damaged Churches. In 1923, religious education was made compulsory in secondary schools. The Roman question was finally settled in 1929 with the signing of the Lateran Pacts. The Vatican became a sovereign state and a large sum was given to it for the loss of papal territories in 1860 and 1870. The Church's main lay organization, Catholic Action, was guaranteed freedom provided it stayed out of politics.

### 13.3.3 Major Types of Fascist Mass Organizations

At the top was the Grand Council of Fascism created in 1922 as a consultative body which was converted into an organ of state by 1928. But, grass-root organizations were more important. The military type Militia developed out of the fascist squads. It was trained to use all kind of weapons and centred on a core of professional soldiers. Its cadres were indoctrinated and used against opponents. The semi-military propaganda-type organization included Balilla, young vanguards and the young fascists. These organizations were bureaucratically controlled by the Party. The regimented fascist unions for workers were another major mass organization. Fascism's most effective experiment in consent-building was creation of the Opera Nazionale Dopolavoro, set up in 1925, its main concern being the organization of leisure-time. It ran a huge network of local clubs and recreational facilities with libraries, bars, billiards halls and sport grounds. The Dopolavoro circles arranged concerts, plays and film shows, organized outings and provided extremely cheap summer holidays for children. By the 1930s, there were about 20,000 such circles in Italy.

### 13.3.4 Nature of the Fascist State

Though some characterize it as a — 'totalitarian' state, the preeminent authority of the state remained only in the areas of conflict, it was never total. Unlike the Nazi German state, it never achieved even an approximate day-to-day institutional control. The bureaucratic structure was never able to intervene in all avenues of life. It was primarily a dictatorship that presided over a pluralistic or semi-pluralistic system, pluralist not in ideological but in an institutional sense. Big business, industry, finance and even army retained their autonomy to a large degree while labour interests were more and more regimented. The administrative

machinery was preserved. The bureaucracy was never subjected to a systematic purge, and was dominated, as before, by career officials. The police and Carabinieri were similarly unpoliticized, i.e., they were not taken over by party officials; however, a new political police, the OVRA was created in 1932. Fascism came to power on the basis of a tacit compromise with the established institutions and elites and never fully escaped the constraints of that compromise.

The state intervention in the economic life of the nation was marginal in the early part of regime. The Direct state investment during the Depression was only an emergency measure. In 1933, after the foundation of IRI (*Institute for Industrial Reconstruction*) and IMI (Istituto Mobiliare Itiliano), state intervention increased. But even in 1940, IRI possessed only about 17.8 per cent of the capital assets of Italian industry. The state in particular fostered the growth of chemical, electrical and machine industries and gave impetus to modernization through electrification of railways and growth of telephone and radio industry. Another significant feature was the lack of economic militarism or major investments in military production despite the regime's rhetoric of Italy being 'in a permanent state of war'. Related to this was the predominance of the humanistic intelligentsia in Italy which was not reduced in favour of technical experts.

The Fascist State also introduced certain welfare schemes for workers in 1930s. Family allowances were given in 1934, largely to compensate the loss of income resulting from the imposition of a forty hour week. Insurance against sickness and accident was incorporated into wage agreements, and in later 1930s Christmas bonus and holiday pay were introduced.

The Italian state also lacked any policy of racial anti-Semitism, at least up to 1937. There were only about 45,000 Jew families and they were well assimilated. Even in 1938, the Party had 10,125 Jewish members. In November 1938, however, under the influence of Nazis, racial Laws were passed which banned marriages with Jews, denied jobs to them in public services, debarred them from joining the Fascist Party and from owning more than 50 hectares of land.

### 13.3.5 The Fall and Solo Republic

The overthrow of militarily underprepared Mussolini's regime in 1943 was effected by an adhoc coalition of the old conservative right represented by the monarchy, army and the upper propertied classes led by moderate fascist leaders. The Solo republic which appeared 'as a German satellite, divested of its former right-wing allies attempted to introduce certain mechanisms for workers' councils and profit-sharing and envisaged increasing nationalization of industries. But this radicalism proved to be the gesture of a dying organism.

#### Check Your Progress 2

- 1) What ideological strands contributed to the growth of fascism in Italy?

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2) How did the nature of fascist state change after seizure of power by Mussolini?

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3) How was Italian fascism different from its German counterpart?

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### 13.4 FASCISM IN DIFFERENT PARTS OF EUROPE

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#### Spain

After Italy, Spain was an important European country which witnessed rise of fascist government. The first phase of authoritarian government in Spain was established between 1923-30 by General Miguel Primo de Rivera. It emerged as a kind of military reaction to the socialist pressure for democratic reforms and above all the attempt of Spanish Parliament to fix ‘responsibilities’ for disastrous military campaign in Morocco, where 9,000 soldiers were killed by Abed-el-Karim Rifian rebels after the collapse of its military command. Initially the overthrow of the Spanish Cortes or parliament was intended to be a temporary step. But a dictatorship was institutionalized gradually. This dictatorship, which some call ‘Fascism from above’, was based on economic nationalism, protectionism and militant advocacy of a ‘strong’ and ‘hierarchic’ executive for restraining ‘social chaos’ and attempted mobilization of people from above. It was particularly hostile to the activities of Anarcho-Syndicalist labour union, Confederacion Nacinal de Trabajadores (CNT) and Socialist Union UGT (Union General deTrabajadores). The dictator created Union Patriotica Party for a controlled popular mobilization. The Party was based on a militant Catholic ideology and found support of agrarian interests. Similarly, Rivera institutionalized Somaten, a traditional Catalan militia which protected capitalists during crisis and strikes. But the new militia remained an auxiliary of authorities in their endeavour to preserve order and never acquired the status of a radical fascist militia.

The demise of Rivera’s dictatorship inaugurated a new phase of mass democracy and led to the radicalization of Spanish politics — along both left and right lines. CEDA or the Confederation of Spanish Right groups was the main conservative authoritarian party during 1933-36. Its youth movement (JAP) underwent a certain vertigo of fascistization but remained ambivalent. The neo-traditionalist Carlist and Alfonsino Monarchists represented another strand of right-radicalism. The



Alfonsino neo-monarchists were especially influenced by the Action Francaise — a rightist-French group as well as the Right Nationalist Wing of Italian fascism. Their journal *Accion Espanola*, and their main ideologue Jose Calvo Sotelo envisioned establishment of a new authoritarian dictatorship preceding installation of monarchy with the help of traditional elites—army, landowners, church, etc. and wanted to replace literal parliament by an indirect corporate chamber representing social and economic interests. Later, Franco regime approximated the structure and policies of Sotelo ideas.

The open fascist groups, however, remained small and insignificant in the Spanish Politics. Between 1931 and 1934, a small band of students organized as *Juntas de ofensiva Nacional Sindicalista* (JONS). Their programme resembled Italian fascism.

In October 1933, Jose Antonio Primo de Rivera, with financial assistance from the Basque businessmen formed *Falange Espanola* (or Spanish Phalanx) to give form and ideological content to the national authoritarian movement. JONS merged with Falange in early 1934.

However, it remained politically insignificant and relied heavily on student clientele in the absence of a broader lower or middle class support. By 1935, it assumed more radical tones of national syndicalism and criticized Italian fascism as too conservative and capitalistic. Falange advocated nationalistic ideology, believed in 'authority, hierarchy and order' and its 27 Point Programme included development of a national-sindicalist state, nationalization of banking and credit facilities and the confiscation of large landed estates. This programme resembled early radical programme of Italian fascists. Falangism, however, retained a basic Catholic religious identity, despite being politically anti-clerical. Large sections of Spanish right became 'fascitized' but Falange itself failed to acquire a mass-following. In 1936 election, it received only 44,000 votes or 0.7 per cent of all votes cast. The failure of militant nationalistic ideology in Spain stemmed partially the influence of intense regional nationalism (or sub-nationalism) of Catalans and Basques, directed against the unified Spanish nation-state. Moreover, Spanish Civil war (1936-39) produced a polarized revolutionary-counter revolutionary conflict in which leadership passed completely in the hands of the insurgent Nationalist Army which created the Franco regime and subordinated Falange to military dictatorship. In 1937, Franco took over the Falange movement and created a syncretic, heterogeneous state party on the basis of Falangism. This new party was a union of Falangists, Calists and all other members of various rightist and other groups willing to join it. Falange's programme was raised to the status of official state doctrine but it remained modifiable according to future requirements. Only a marginal role was played by the old Falangist in the new dictatorial Franquist state and even in the administration of new state party, the *Falangei Espanola Tradicionalista*. The early Franquism contained a major component of fascism, but it was so restricted within a right-wing, Pretorian, catholic and semi-pluralist structure, that the category of 'semi-fascist' would probably be more accurate. Franquism resembled Italian fascism in its use of subordinated state fascist party and in its limited pluralism under executive dictatorship. By 1945 non-mobilized, 'bureaucratic' authoritarianism replaced a partially mobilized semi-fascist state.

## France

France had many fascist groups but none of them was able to cross 2 per cent votes, the minimum required to gain representation in the French electoral system. Action Francaise, founded in 1899, was a kind of proto-fascist reactionary movement. *George Valois Le Faisceau* (founded in 1925) tried to wed syndicalism with nationalism. The *Jeunesses patriots* (1924-28), was also organized on military pattern and believed in street-violence. Some other groups developed a broader appeal. Among these were the *Solidarite Francaise* (1933) and *Croix de Feu*. The latter gained support from the big business and finance. Politically, it leaned towards Catholic conservatism. Banned by the Popular Front ministry in 1936, it soon reorganized as the *Parti Social francais*. The Francistes, organized in 1933 by Marcel Buccard, was another right-wing group.

*The Parti Populaire Francaise*, led by an ex-Communist, Jacques Doriot, represented a kind of half-way house between socialism and nationalistic class collaboration. Marcel Deat, a deviant from socialism, also propagated need for national planning and integration of all productive forces. However, during the German occupation, Deat moved towards fascism and his *Rassemblement National Populaire* (1941) formed the extreme left-wing of French fascism.

The Parties committed to democratic republic (i.e. Socialist, Communist and Radical) created a Popular Front against fascism (1934-35). The real or perceived threat of fascist seizure of power receded after electoral gains of the left (1936) and formation of a coalition government with the support of the Popular Front till 1940.

### The Vichy Government

The devastating defeat of French forces in the Battle of France in which 92,000 army men were killed and 18,50,000 were taken as prisoners of war by the German troops, led to a growing demand in France for an armistice voiced by Deputy Prime Minister, Marshal Petain and new Commander-in-chief, Weigand. The French Prime Minister Paul Reynaud resigned on 16 June 1940, and Marshal Petain concluded the terms of armistice which included reduction of French army to 100,000 men equipped only to maintain internal order, demobilization of Home Fleet, German occupation of a substantial part of France, an enormous levy to meet the cost of occupiers, and retention of French prisoners of war practically as hostages until the final conclusion of a peace treaty. Marshal Petain established his government on 1 July 1940, in the cramped and unsuitable hotel rooms of Spa town of Vichy. A demoralised National Assembly gave the right to draft a new constitution and granted 'full executive and legislative powers' to the Marshal. Petain outlook can be summed up by the formulae 'Work, Family and Homeland' (*Travail, Famille and Patrie* in French) which substituted the familiar republican device Liberty, Fraternity and Equality. The Vichy government represented the conservative elite groups' desire to maintain social-hierarchy and order. Rather than Fascism, the dominant feature of new government was traditionalism associated with movement like Action Francaise. The Vichy government stressed proper moral instruction as a means of protecting social order. There were attempts to glorify the roles of house wife and mother and to reduce the number of women working outside the home. As a result, the regime received widespread support of the clergy. The economy however was increasingly subordinated to German interests. By 1943, 15 per cent of the agricultural and 40 per cent of industrial output was exported to Germany as the

occupation cost. The peasant corporation, created in December 1940 as a means of producer's self-regulation, was rapidly turned into a bureaucratic machine for official intervention in the market. In industry, too growing German demands called for a degree of planning which heralded the development of post-war technocracy. The paternalistic rhetoric and corporatist structures became effectively a cover for policies overwhelmingly favourable to businessmen. Trade unions were banned and any sign of labour resistance was brutally repressed. At local level, appointed mayors replaced the elected councils. Mediation between the masses and Vichy was fostered through an inflated civil service. This led to sway of an unelected social and administrative elite, imposing its control through the bureaucracy and corporations.

In return for collaboration, Vichy had expected concessions on the armistice terms and a favourable peace treaty. However, with the German entry into unoccupied zone in November 1940, Vichy was reduced to the status of a dependent satellite. Initially, however, only few fascists were associated with the government. Marcel Deat and Joseph Darnad were given ministerial berths only in December 1943.

Vichy's anti-semitism also tended to be nationalistic and Catholic rather than racialist. The armistice obliged Vichy government to repatriate Jewish refugees of German origin. In October 1940, a piece of legislation debarred Jews from the electric offices, civil service and teaching and journalism besides imposing quotas on the entry to most professions; although war-veterans and the fully assimilated Jews were exempted. Jewish property was confiscated with Vichy's cooperation in the occupied zone and foreign Jews were repatriated. These policies were extended to the unoccupied zone also after the summer of 1941.

Allied forces landed on the Coast of Normandy on 6 June 1944 and Paris was liberated on 25 August 1944. By the end of 1944, most of France was free of German troops. Vichy government was forced by the German authorities to shift to eastern France, and finally, as virtual captives, into German itself.

### **The Eastern Central Europe**

Quite apart from the established regions of Italy, Spain and France fascism also existed in the form of brief political experiments and organizations in certain other countries of Europe. Not all these organizations possessed the basic ingredients of fascism. The degree and extent of fascism practiced also varied. Let us look at the examples of Poland, Hungary, Baltic States and Czecho-Slovak.

#### **Poland**

Poland had a weak fascist movement. Pilsudski's coup d'tat in 1926 resulted in a strong authoritarian regime. It functioned as a moderate semi-pluralist system up to 1935. National Democratic Party of Western Poland was a mass parliamentary party, advocated anti-Semitism and a more repressive policy towards other national minorities. Its radical youth wing split off as national radicals in 1930s and gave birth to two more explicitly fascist like organizations — ABC and Falanga. Falanga's ideology was of extreme Catholicism and it insisted on elimination of private sector of the economy in favour of some-sort of national socialism.

A new corporative, authoritarian Constitution in 1935 reduced the sphere of tolerated pluralism. Pilsudski also died in 1935 and the Colonels who succeeded him created a new proto-fascist state party—the Camp of National Unity or OZN. Colonel Koe, its first director, came to rely heavily on Boleslaw Piasecki, the head of Falanga, and the radical implications of this relationship led to Koe's ouster and the severing of the Falanga's connection. Some have described this system as 'directed democracy', but by 1939, the regime was moving towards a mobilized state organization and a controlled one party system.

### **Hungary**

Hungary had the largest assortment of various fascist, fascist type, right radical and simply authoritarian nationalist groups. A large unemployed bureaucratic middle class contributed to fascist growth in the aftermath of Communist Bela Kun revolt (1919). During most of the Interwar period Hungary was governed by the conservative authoritarian regime of Admiral Horthy. It valued nineteenth century social hierarchy and was governed by a restrictive parliament based on limited suffrage. The official state party was National Unity Party. A Fascist group, 'Szeged fascists', led by Gyula Gombos lacked popular support, but Gombos was offered prime ministership by Horthy in 1932 on the condition that he would moderate his programme and abandon anti-semitism. He tried to transform the official National Unity Party and state towards national socialism. This transformation, however, remained partial due to his sudden death in 1936.

'Arrow Cross' of Ferenc Szalasi achieved more substantial mass support. The Movement believed in Hungarian racism and proposed a drastic Hungarian expansion that would incorporate the greater Danube-Carpathian area. But there was proposal of autonomy to regions inhabited by a strong majority (of about 80-90 per cent) of a single non-Magyar people. Another anomaly was Szalasi's theoretical eschewal of violence. His movement was not anti-semitic but 'asemitic', advocating that all Jews leave Hungary for elsewhere. 'Arrow Cross' further advocated a revolutionary economic corporatism that would overthrow big landlords and capital in the interest of greater collective well-being. It acquired a broad mass-base among workers and peasants in the late 1930s but its popularity was waning during the war. The movement itself became more Nazified and was placed in power briefly in 1944 as a puppet of German military.

### **Czecho-Slovak**

It had two overtly fascist organizations: The National Fascist Community (NFC, organized in 1926) and the Czech National Socialist Camp which developed in 1930s. These remained weak as workers clung to socialism and the middle classes remained under the influence of some variants of liberalism. There was partial fascistization of the Slovak People's Party, the principal political force in Slovakia during the Inter-war period. It was originally a moderate conservative authoritarian Catholic-populist nationalist party oriented towards corporatism. It was influenced by Nazification after 1938 when anti-Semitic policies were adopted that excluded Jews from business and the professions. Later, many Jews were deported to Poland under Nazi pressure.

### **Baltic States**

A rightist moderate dictatorship was established in Lithuania by a military coup at the close of 1936 after major gains by the left in the domestic elections. Antanas

Smetona remained the head of the state till its disappearance in 1940. Some degree of pluralism was tolerated. However, the state was moving towards one party regime in 1940. The State Party National Union (*Tautnin Kai*) found social support among the intelligentsia and the rich peasants.

By contrast, the more moderate regimes of ‘authoritarian democracy’ in Latvia and Estonia were instituted simply as preventive authoritarianism in 1934 by the moderate forces. Konstantin Pats, the leader of Farmers Party in Estonia established a more authoritarian government to check the influence of the right-radical Association of Estonian Freedom Fighters. In Latvia, the new Ulmanis government was directed against both the left and the Thunder Cross, a vigorous Latvian fascist type party influenced by Nazism, though politically strongly anti-German. However, pluralism was tolerated in both Latvia and Estonia and in neither case did a well institutionalized dictatorship develop.

### Check Your Progress 3

- 1) Write five sentences about Falange’s ideology?

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- 2) What was the role of ‘Arrow Cross’ in the political life of Hungary? Write in about 100 words.

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## 13.5 FORMATION OF THE NAZI PARTY IN GERMANY

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The German state associated with the name of Adolf Hitler earned for itself the distinction of being the most criminal and destructive regime in world history, a status linked not only with the provocations which launched the Second World War, but also with the use of industrial techniques for the performance of mass

murder. The first resulted in the deaths of at least 55 million people, the second in the genocide of between 4 to 6 million European Jews and gypsies. In decades to come historians will still be looking for answers to how and why such deadly energies could have developed and been unleashed upon the world.

We may not assume that the ideological and structural features of Nazism were unique and had no roots in Germany's past. Many precursive elements were present in the late nineteenth century. The period of Kaiser William II (1890-1914), a convinced German imperialist, was marked by a sea change in German politics, beginning with his dismissal of Bismarck, and by rapid economic development. These changes marked crucial problems such as the financial dependence of the central government upon the states; the paralysis of imperial policy because of the discrepancy between the conservative Prussian system and that of an Empire founded upon universal manhood suffrage. Since the chancellor was not responsible to the Reichstag, parliamentary life seemed to be outside the sphere within which real decisions were made. The lack of constitutional reform deprived political parties of responsibility, leading to sectarian and doctrinaire tendencies and the alliance of landed and industrial interests precluded the success of socialist revisionism, with its attempts to integrate the working class into the state. Furthermore, the existence of militaristic tendencies within the state bureaucracy was conducive to a culture of obedience, even in domestic life. In 1893 the strength of the Army was increased by 83,000, and by 1913 it had grown to 780,000 men. The internal tensions in the system were only forestalled by the outbreak of the First World War.

In the realm of ideology too, there were strong precursors to the doctrines of the Nazi era. Racialism and imperialism were powerful themes in the aspirations of the German elite, for whom the phrase *Weltpolitik* signified their search for great-power status and a world mission. As he despatched his troops to China in 1900 during the Boxer Rebellion, the Kaiser exhorted them to behave as Huns. Then again, from 1880 onwards, there developed in the German-speaking world the growth of anti-Semitic politics, concurrent with what was happening in Russia. In Vienna, the Christian Socialist mayor combined social and administrative reform with virulent scapegoating of the Jews for all social ills. In Berlin the Protestant Christian Social Movement was led by the court chaplain, Adolf Stocker, who combined anti-Semitism with puritanism in his attacks upon the emergent economic order.

The accession to power of the social democrats and the subsequent murder of the Spartacist leaders Rosa Luxemburg and Karl Liebknecht by the Freikorps (which consisted of demobilized soldiers), forever embittered the relations between the right and left wings of German social democracy. Germany was gripped by a revolutionary situation in 1919, with workers and soldiers' councils in Hamburg, Berlin, and a wave of unionizations. There was even a brief soviet republic in Bavaria. Thereafter the Communist Party was founded which made several attempts at an insurrectionary overthrow of the hated "social-democratic" republic. In 1923 there was a severe round of inflation, along with the occupation of the Ruhr by France and Belgium. There was an attempted putsch in 1920 and a communist rising in Hamburg in October 1923, after which martial law was declared for a while. The repeated attempts by the communists to bring about a soviet-like seizure of power sharpened tensions, spread fear among the middle classes and conservative elements, and contributed to an atmosphere of extreme

polarization. The situation was compounded by the tendency on the part of demobilized soldiers to attribute defeat in war to betrayal in the rear by communists and social democrats alike (this was the notorious “stab in the back” theory); and the crippling war reparations imposed on Germany by the victorious powers under the Treaty of Versailles, which included heavy monetary payments, curbs on the size of the armed forces, and a temporary occupation of Germany’s most heavily industrialized and mineral rich provinces.

Anton Drexler in Munich founded the German Workers Party in 1919. Ideologically speaking, it combined socialist radicalism with extreme nationalism, a hatred of Slavs and Jews and a desire to find scapegoats for defeat. Hitler was first discovered by Drexler and acquired notoriety as a beer-hall demagogue. Among his earliest collaborators was the army officer Ernst Rohm, who was later to lead the Stormtroopers (SA). In 1920-21 Hitler emerged as the leader of the party, which soon after became the German National Socialist Worker’s Party (NSDAP). Its programme was radical and chauvinist. It called for:

- a Greater Germany with land and colonies,
- the annulment of Versailles,
- profit sharing in big firms,
- the abolition of unearned incomes,
- land reforms, and
- the lease of department store of small traders. It even called for the enhancement of the authority of Parliament. As these were radical slogans which were forgotten after they came to power in 1933.

The Weimar Republic underwent a crisis in 1922-23. The collapse of the monetary system resulted in hyper inflation, with one pound exchanging for 15 million marks in September 1923. In January 1923 the French army occupied the Ruhr in response to Germany’s defaulting on reparations payments. Gustave Stresemann became the new Chancellor in September and followed a policy of keeping the terms of the Versailles treaty, a step that angered the Right. Meanwhile the success of Mussolini’s March on Rome in 1922 has inspired Hitler, and he attempted a seizure of power in Munich in November 1923, with the co-operation of senior army officers such as Field Marshal Ludendorff. However the Reichwehr as an institution remained loyal to Weimar and sixteen Nazis were killed in street clashes. Hitler himself underwent a (somewhat lenient) trial for someone accused of high treason, and was jailed for most of 1924, during which period he wrote *Mein Kampf*. The book was published in 1924, and is significant for explicit statements on his concept of *Lebensraum* (living space for the German people), an Eastern Empire, the struggle between races and nations, and an international Jewish conspiracy responsible for both capitalism and communism. Parliamentary democracy, wrote Hitler, “sins against the basic aristocratic principle of Nature”; “all human culture” was “almost exclusively the creative product of the Aryan”, who alone “was the founder of all higher humanity”; and “in Russian Bolshevism we must see the attempt undertaken by the Jews in the twentieth century to achieve world domination”.

The Nazi Party was banned during Hitler’s incarceration, which ended in December 1924. The ban was lifted in 1925, and the party was re-organised, with Hitler as its first member. He quickly established his control over the ‘left’

wing controlled by Gregor Strasser in the north, where Goebbels became his new and longest lasting ally. New *Grauleiter* (district leaders) were appointed, the SA was given a new head, and the authoritarian role of the Leader formalised. 'In February 1926 Hitler met leading Hamburg industrialist and won them over with his radical anti-communist rhetoric. The Nazis contempt for democracy could not have been more explicitly put than by Goebbels in 1928, "We become Reichstag deputies in order to paralyze the Weimar democracy with its own assistance. If democracy is stupid enough to give us free travel passes and per diem allowance for this purpose that is its affair.... We come as enemies! Like the wolf tearing into the flock of sheep, that is how we come..."

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## 13.6 THE CRISIS OF THE PARLIAMENTARY REPUBLIC

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Ebert was the first President (1919-25) of Weimar, under whose constitution the Reichstag had considerably more powers than before. Nevertheless, it was the president who appointed the chancellor and possessed emergency powers to issue decrees. The principle of proportional representation resulted in the formation of splinter parties, which along with the provision for plebiscites and imitation on provincial rights undermined constitutional functioning. The SPD (Socialist Democratic Party) and the Centre Party upheld the republic. After the death of President Ebert (1919-25), came the presidentship of Field Marshal von Hindenburg, 1925-34; the avowed monarchist and Junker general, whose incumbency was to prove disastrous for democracy in Germany.

The Republic weathered the crises of 1922-23. The Stresemann government obtained the withdrawal of French troops from the Ruhr, stabilised the currency, negotiated the Dawes Plan with the Allied Powers which reduced reparation payments to acceptable levels and provided much needed foreign currency loans and signed the Locarno Pact with Britain and France in December 1925, under which Germany recognised her western borders as final. In March 1926 Germany was admitted to the League of Nations. Under the Young Plan of 1929, reparations were scaled down again, the payment period extended, and France and Britain agreed to withdraw troops from the Rhineland in 1930, five years ahead of the agreed schedule. On the other hand, there was high unemployment, far too great a dependence on foreign investment and stagnation in German agriculture. Political instability was endemic, with no single party majorities, as many as 15 ministries between 1919 and 1928, and a growing attractiveness of the radicalism of both Right and Left. Moreover, right-wing populism was becoming influential among senior army officers, with their intense dislike for the disarmament provisions of the Versailles Treaty.

The Wall Street Crash of October 1929 had a terrible impact on Germany, with the withdrawal of American loans, loss of export markets, and collapse of industrial production. Unemployment rose to 5.6 million in 1932. The government struggled to meet the financial burdens caused by a fall in tax receipts and a rise in unemployment benefits. The election to the fourth Reichstag in May 1928 yielded hopeful result, with the Nazis kept to a low 12 seats out of 491 and the SPD gaining 22 seats to reach 153. The KPD (Communist Party of Germany) had 54. (The SPD & KPD had a total of 42 per cent of the seats). A coalition of moderate parties led by Muller was formed, which proved incapable of agreeing on economic policy. The crisis of the state remained unresolved. Muller's



resignation in March 1930 marked the end of the parliamentary period of Weimar. Heinrich Brüning of the Centre Party became the next Chancellor, and began to implement unpopular financial policies by invoking Article 48, which allowed for legislation by presidential decree. The constitutional crisis, which resulted, was dealt with by dissolution of the Reichstag. Thereafter several important deflationary measures reducing unemployment benefits, raising taxes, etc. were implemented by decree. Wages fell further, and so did purchasing power. In September 1930 Brüning put his policies to the test. The election to the fifth Reichstag resulted in massive gains for the Nazis, who now held 107 seats. Their share of the vote had risen by 800 per cent. With his moderate allies losing support, Brüning had to rely on the lukewarm support of the SPD.

Meanwhile political tensions were on the rise, with street clashes between the SA and the communists. It was clear that the old conservative alliance was being reversed, with Hitler now in a dominant position. The government's attempted ban on the SA in April 1932 angered Nazi sympathizers in the elite, which included Kaiser William's son. President Hindenburg replaced Brüning by the end of May 1932 by Fritz von Papen, an aristocrat with strong right-wing leanings, who became the first Centrist politician to collaborate with Hitler. The ban on the SA and SS was lifted, the SPD provincial government in Prussia dismissed, and the Reichstag dissolved yet again. The election campaign was extremely violent, with the SA taking to the streets against real and perceived enemies. There were 99 deaths and over a thousand cases of injury. The sixth Reichstag saw the Nazis gaining 230 seats, with 37 per cent of the vote. The SPD had 133 seats, and the KPD 89. Hindenburg was still reluctant to make Hitler the Chancellor, as was the latter to accept anything less. During the next few months Hitler canvassed support among industrialists and bankers such as von Thyssen and Hjalmar Schacht, as well as members of the Reichslandbund, an organization of Prussian landholders. Papen soon decided to gamble on another general election, to be held in November 1932. The elections to the seventh Reichstag resulted in a decline of the Nazi vote and a loss of 34 seats, down to 196. The SPD had 121 seats, and the KPD 100 seats. Soon afterwards, Defence Minister Schleicher replaced Papen as Chancellor for a short period during which he attempted to obtain dissolution of the Reichstag and a proclamation of a state of emergency. A series of political intrigues in January 1933 led to an agreement to a conservative coalition to be led by Hitler as Chancellor. There were to be only three Nazis in a twelve-member government, and the conservatives believed that they could use Hitler to suppress the left. In a series of ruthless political moves Hitler proved them disastrously wrong, as he consolidated his hold on power, crushed all real and potential opposition, and created a highly centralized state. In March 1933, elections took place for the eighth Reichstag. The Nazis won 288 seats, the KPD 81 (they were all immediately disqualified), and the SPD 120.

There had been five general elections from 1928 to 1933. The NSDAP had grown from a membership of 27,000 in 1925, to 49,000 in 1926, 72,000 in 1927, 108,000 in 1928, to 178,000 in 1928- an increase of 559 per cent in just five years. What were the reasons for this phenomenal growth? Essentially, it was the failure of republicanism and the unwillingness of political parties to compromise for a common cause. The ultra-left posture of the Stalinist KPD also worked in tandem with rightist attacks against the "system", and the ideological climate was deeply affected by the economic crisis, the degeneration of state organs, and the steady corrosion of the judiciary which increasingly began to protect right

radicals. (An example of this was the Leipzig trial of spring 1930, during which three army lieutenants were tried for high treason. Hitler appeared in their defence, threatening the court in his deposition. The sentence was to last for only eighteen months). David Abraham stresses Marx's point that Germany suffered "not only from the development of capitalist production, but also from its incompleteness". He analyses the disproportionate influence over state policy of the East Elbian Junkers, who occupied vital state positions as a virtual ruling class; although the agricultural contribution to national GNP was less than 15 per cent and the agrarian population only a quarter of the total. The increased political importance of the peasantry under universal suffrage altered relation in the countryside. Moreover there were severe conflicts between fraction of the elite classes, between agriculture and industry as sectors, between grain estate owners and the electorally influential dairy and livestock peasants; the older cartelized heavy industrialists vs the new and dynamic capital intensive industries, etc. While these fractions adopted different positions towards political coalitions, organized labour, trade and fiscal policies, and reparation, the state proved unable to produce a balance between them workable within democratic institutions. For their party, the Junkers combined their control of the state and army bureaucracy with the advantage of avoiding the fragmentation of the bourgeoisie. After 1929 the locus of decision making narrowed, with parliament, the parties and finally even cabinet ministers were becoming irrelevant and corporate interests like the RDI (the League of German Industry) exercising increasing influence over the state.

With the onset of the Great Depression the bourgeoisie had become alarmed by the SPD's programme of integration and representing the interest of the working class. The economic and fiscal crisis made the costs of social collaboration coupled with the payment of reparations intolerable for the dominant classes. The capitalists abandoned their own programme of compromise and competition with the SPD, a policy that had provided the basis for stability between 1925 till 1930. The frequency of elections was a manifestation of a crisis in state legitimacy and served to further destabilize the situation. Once it was clear that the Nazis would support the social order, the leading industrial circles accepted the idea of splitting the party and co-opting its mass base, and then calling upon them to take charge of the state to provide the state a popular base which it lacked since 1930. The crisis of the last years of the Weimar Republic stemmed in large part from the inability of the state to organize the interest of the members of the dominant classes in an autonomous fashion, going beyond partial interest. The Republic was unable to safeguard existing social relations, not because of any revolutionary threat, but rather because of the conflicts and contradictions within, the bloc of dominant classes, together with the results of the policy indeterminacy of the preceding years.

**Check Your Progress 4**

- 1) Write in brief about factors which may be said to have laid the foundation of German fascism.

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- 2) Write ten lines on the foundation and Programme of the Nazi Party.

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- 3) What were the circumstances under which the Nazi party captured power?

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### **13.7 STATE AND SOCIETY IN THE THIRD REICH**

In the first eighteen months of Nazi rule a tense and unstable balance existed between three centres of power: the Party monopoly, centralised governmental dictatorship and personal absolutism. Radical forces in the Party/SA had helped Hitler overcome the ‘containment’ policy of the conservative. In between he switched sides and used the state to prevent the radicals from completing the process of seizure of power. It was his absolutism that was strengthened by the conflicting processes of revolution and counter-revolution. But this very absolutism, far from resolving conflicts of interest within the state, tended to create an internally riven and brittle structure. Thus, the virtual separation and elevation of the Gestapo (the *Geheime Staatspolizei*) from the internal administration meant institutional independence from the ministry. The removal of military and economic experts such as Blomberg, Fritsch and Beck (senior generals who differed on military adventures such as the occupation of the Rhineland) and Schacht, organiser of the four-year Plans, reflect this internal fragmentation of the state. Hitler often used blackmail to destroy conservative critics such as Blomberg and Fritsch. His own indifference to the minutiae of administration and his abrupt and whimsical style, which obscured the meaning, and effects of his decisions, had a crippling impact upon legislation and administration. The cabinet was divided into ministers with more or less access to the Fuehrer. Government disintegrated into a polyocracy of separate departments, and departmental decrees and policies replaced the collegial style of governance. We give below a brief outline of the main characteristics of the new dispensation.

#### **Subordination of Judiciary**

The Weimar Republic was never formally abrogated by its worst enemies. Ironically, its own constitution was used as an instrument to subvert it beyond recognition. After the Enabling Act was passed, major changes were introduced which rapidly altered the juridical basis of the state. Thus, the legal lights of the Third Reich proudly proclaimed that “Hitler is the Law”, and produced theories

transforming the principle of the legal state into that of the leader state, or *Fuhrerstaat*. The extra-legal notion of the Leader, to whom the civil service and the Army swore “unconditional obedience” by “sacred oath”, assumed crucial importance in administrative functioning and signified a decisive break with constitutionalism. The democratic notion of the ‘general will’ was supplanted by that of the will of Leader, which became the basis for the legitimacy of law. All jurists were required to join a Nazi jurist organisation, and dismissals for unreliability were frequent. After three of the four communist defendants in the Reichstag fire case were acquitted for want of evidence, treason cases were taken away from the jurisdiction of the Supreme Court and transferred to a new People’s Court, whose seven man bench was to have five Nazis. Most under trials received death sentence from this tribunal. The Special Courts took over from ordinary ones all cases of political crime.

### **Gestapo**

The Secret State Police Office or Gestapo, was created in 1933 under the Prussian Interior Ministry, and rapidly attained autonomy from the provincial government. From 1934 Heinrich Himmler became the head of the nation-wide Gestapo. Its Prussian section was headed by Reinhard Heydrich, who was also in charge of the SD, a party intelligence organisation affiliated to the dreaded SS. The SD had over 100,000 informers spread over the country, and among other activities it used to investigate the “no” votes in Hitler’s plebiscites. The SS had originated in the early 1920’s as Hitler’s personal guard (since he was never completely sure of the loyalty of the SA) and had become an internal disciplinary executive of the Nazis in 1931. In 1935 the Prussian Supreme Court declared the decisions of the Gestapoto be beyond judicial review. In short, Heydrich acquired the untrammelled power of life and death over, every German. In 1936 Himmler became the Reichsfuhrer-SS. The unification of command, over state police and party intelligence organization resulted in the independence of the domestic terror machinery and was the germ of the SS state, which in the course of following year developed its own political administration and bureaucracy, army units and machinery for mass murder. Its central agency was the RSHA, or Reich Security Office, under Heydrich. The SS was especially active in the occupied territories of Eastern Europe.

### **Workers and Peasants**

Working people’s lives were deeply affected by the policies of the new regime. The Nazis’ militarist version of the Keynesian doctrine of state intervention in the economy drastically reduced unemployment figures, which declined from 6 million in 1932 to less than a million in 1936. National production rose by 102% by 1937. The regime began to define the economy as a “war economy”, with the aim of preparing for total war. In a secret Defence Law passed on 21 May 1935, Hjalmar Schacht was appointed the economic Plenipotentiary for the War Economy, whose job included camouflaging violations of the Versailles Treaty. Businessmen, who had welcomed the Nazis now, were subjected to heavy taxes, “Special contributions” and compulsory membership of the Reich Economic Chamber. But heavy industry, especially the armaments sector, made good profits. The wage bill-declined (in real terms) and strikes ceased. These changes were effected at the cost of the total obliteration of the trade union movement and left-wing political formations, in particular the Social-Democratic party and the KPD.

Wages were fixed by “Trustees” appointed by the owners (workers were not consulted about their appointments). Piece-rates and intensification of labour were announced as the only means to increase incomes. Though unemployment declined, the share of the German workers in the National Income fell from 56.9 per cent in 1932 to 53.6 per cent in 1938. Income from capital rose from 17.4 per cent to 26.6 per cent. Because of near total employment, total income from wages and salaries rose by 66 per cent. But income from business and capital rose by 146%. A Labour Front was created in October 1934 to function as the “organisation of creative Germans of brain and fist”. It operated not as a trade union but as a propaganda machine, and included employers and professionals as members. Its stated aim was the maximisation of work, and its officials had to be Nazis. Feudal values were inscribed in its rules—employers were enjoined to look after the well-being of their workers who in turn were asked to be faithful to their employers. Workers’ freedom of movement was severely restricted by government decrees and subject to controls by bureaucracy and employers alike. The “Strength through Joy” movement provided regimented leisure to millions, and millions of embezzled deutschmarks to its swollen bureaucracy which included the Labour Front leader, Dr Ley.

In 1933, agricultural income was at its lowest since the war, and indebtedness stood at 12 billion marks. Much of Hitler’s populist demagoguery was directed at the peasants. But the Nazis never dared disturb Junker landholdings. The Farm Law of 29 September 1933 declared all farms of up to 125 hectares to be indivisible hereditary estates. Peasants were virtually bound to the soil, but gained slightly in the prices of agricultural commodities.

### Women

The new regime’s attitude to women and the family was an admixture of ultra-conservative patriarchal sentiment and the racist characteristic of Nazi ideology. One of the earliest party ordinances excluded women from all leading positions in the organization. The slogan “*Kinder, Kirche, Kuche*” (kids, church, kitchen), became the favourite mode of referring to the social role of women, even as economic and sociological necessity diversified their lives and forced them into the labour force. In 1933 women formed 37 per cent of the total employed labour force in Germany. (Skilled women workers earned only 66 per cent of the wages of males for the same jobs). In 1933 women formed one fifth of the student force in the universities — the Nazi regime passed regulation restricting this proportion to not more than one tenth — a measure which was revoked at the outbreak of war. Women had “the task of being beautiful and bringing children into the world”, stated Goebbels, who also announced that the regime’s “displacement of women from public life occurs solely to restore their essential dignity..”. The production of “racially pure” babies became the Nazi’s obsession, and various financial and ideological incentives were offered to females to give birth to more children. These incentives ranged from marriage loans and child subsidies to parents with large families, to awards such as the Honour Cross of the German Mother in bronze, silver and gold, for mothers of four, six, and eight children. These policies were juxtaposed to compulsory sterilization for mentally retarded, physically deformed, deaf or blind person, abortions of half-Jewish embryos, etc. For all their ideological talk of elevating the family, the reality was an increasing divorce rate in the peacetime years, an increase in juvenile delinquency, and once the war began, a growing reliance on female labour, the decimation of large numbers of men in the battlefields and the bizarre

phenomenon of Himmler's officially sponsored illicit impregnation of unwed women by SS men and other "racially valuable" German men in order to produce children "for the Fuehrer".

### **Ban on Art and Literature**

The Nazis were highly antipathetic to liberal and cosmopolitan culture. From May 1933, book burning began under Goebbel's supervision. The German writers whose writings were proscribed included Stefan Zweig, E.M. Remarque, Albert Einstein and Hugo Preuss, who had drafted the Weimar Constitution. Banned foreign authors included H.G. Wells, Sigmund Freud, Andre Gide, Emile Zola and Upton Sinclair. The regimentation of culture was unprecedented for any western nation. Chambers whose decisions had the validity of law were set up for every sphere of cultural life, including the fine arts, music, theatre, literature, press, radio and films. Jews were hounded out of cultural life, and 6500 paintings of painters such as Cezanne, Van Gogh, Gauguin and Picasso were removed from art galleries and museums. A House of German Art was set up. An interesting measure of the public response to this vandalism lies in the fact that an exhibition of "Degenerate Art" had to be shut down because of its popularity.

### **Press**

The Press was completely controlled by standing directives and oral instructions issued by Goebbel. Editors had to be politically and racially 'clean'. Liberal and Jewish — owned newspapers were forced to close down. From 1933 to 1937 the number of dailies declined from 3607 to 2671. The ex-sergeant Max Amann became the German Press financial dictator, and two-thirds of the daily circulation of 25 million came under direct Nazi control. Radio and motion pictures also became organs of propaganda. Hissing at films became so rampant that the Interior minister had to warn against "treasonable behaviour on the part of cinema audience."

### **Policy on Education**

It is a sign of the destructive impact of Nazism on social life that the educational policy of Germany was entrusted to a storm trooper. On 30 April 1934 Bernhard Rust, a local leader of the SA became Minister of Science, Education, and Popular Culture. Rust had been dismissed from a schoolmaster's position in 1930 due to mental instability. All education from primary school curricula to university instruction was Nazified, and the educational jurisdiction of local authorities and provincial governments was eliminated. Text books were re-written and *Mein Kampf* was elevated to the status of unfailing pedagogical guiding star. Teachers were required to join the Nazi Teachers League and swear allegiance to Hitler. A vast majority of university and school teachers had, in any case, held deeply conservative and anti-Semitic views, and had helped undermine the Weimar republic by influencing a huge mass of students of the virtues of Nazism. A small number of liberal professors left, some being murdered where they had fled. Most others succumbed, including the famous philosopher Heidegger, who remained a member of the Nazi party till the end of the war. A contemporary observer characterized these developments as "a scene of prostitution that has stained the honourable history of German learning."

Jews were forbidden to teach. "Racial Science" was introduced in curricula, which required teaching the racial theories of the Aryan-German master race and the Jews as the breeders of all evil. (From 1905 to 1931, 10 German Jews

had won Nobel Prizes in science) Great teachers such as Einstein and Franck (Physics), and Haber and Warburg (Chemistry) were dismissed or retired or forced to emigrate. Those who remained began to teach “German” physics, mathematics, etc. One professor declared Modern Physics to be “an instrument of World Jewry for the destruction of Nordic Science”. Relativity (an invention by Einstein, a Jew) was denounced as a plot. After six years of nazification the number of university students dropped from 127,920 to 58,325; and the numbers studying technological course fell from 20,474 to 9554. Academic standards fell abysmally. Youth leagues by 1937 had 7.7 million members of all ages from 6 to 21. Parents who resisted were warned with the loss of their children. Promising young Nazis were recruited into the “Order Castles”.

### Religious Intolerance

Given the deeply emotive nature of Nazism’s ideological appeal, it is not surprising that the regime sought to control popular religious affiliations. Hitler was nominally a Catholic. However, his stance toward the churches of various denominations was hostile, and at best utilitarian. The Nazi party programme spoke of the need for a “positive Christianity”. On 20 July 1933 a Concordat with the Vatican was signed, which spoke of the Church freedom to regulate her own affairs—a pledge which was systematically violated. But the agreement gave the Third Reich much-needed respectability, and in the perceptions of its leaders, it was the signal to launch an offensive. The Catholic Youth League was dissolved on 30 July 1933. Over the following years thousands of Catholic priests, nuns and lay preachers were arrested and a prominent leader murdered in 1934. On 14 March 1937 Pope Pius XI issued the encyclical entitled “With Burning Sorrow”, charging the Nazi government with violations of the concordat and accusing it of sowing the seeds of hatred, calumny and “fundamental hostility to Christ and His Church”. He warned against the “threatening storm clouds of destructive religious wars which have no aim other than that of extermination.” As things turned out this was one of the most prescient insights into the nature of the regime.

Within the Protestant tradition too, there was conflict, but Nazism fed upon the anti-Semitic prejudices of the Lutherans. (Martin Luther was ferociously anti-Jewish and a staunch believer in absolute obedience to authority). Fanatical Nazis organised separate congregations such as the “German Christians’ Faith Movement”. Hitler personally intervened in the elections to the Synod, which elected the Reich Bishop, although privately he spoke of Protestants as “insignificant little people, submissive as dogs”. The German Christians’ Berlin leader advocated the abandonment of the Old Testament “with its tales of cattle merchants and pimps” and a re-writing of the New Testament, with Jesus’s teaching revised to “correspond entirely with the demands of National Socialism”. Congregations demanded “One People, One Reich, One Faith”, and the exclusion of converted Jews. Pastor Niemoller, who had welcomed the events of 1933, was disillusioned within a year and organised the resistance of the “Confessional Church”, which denounced anti-Semitism and demanded an end to state interference. Hundreds of pastors were arrested, murdered, or sent to concentration camps. On 1 July 1937, Niemoller was arrested after his last sermon, where he uttered the memorable words, “No more are we ready to keep silent at man’s behest when God commands us to speak”. He remained in concentration camp till 1945. On the whole however, the Churches remained loyal to the regime and fulfilled its needs by ordering all pastors to swear allegiance to the Fuehrer. During the war the 30 point programme for the national Reich Church of Germany

outlined church policy, which included the elimination of Christian teaching, the cessation of the publication of the Bible and the placement on altars of nothing except a copy of *Mein Kampf* and a sword.

### Genocide of the Jews

The most oppressive aspect of Hitler’s regime was a systematic persecution of the Jews. The ideology of the Nazi Party was formed by a strong hatred of the Jews and an obsession with maintaining the Aryan purity. The Nuremberg Laws of 15 September 1935 deprived Jews of German citizenship, confining them to “subject” status. Marital or extra-marital relations between Jews and ‘Aryans’ were forbidden. Three more laws over the next few years outcast them completely. In the year of the Berlin Olympic half of all Jews were unemployed. Social ostracism included blatantly vicious signboards and hoardings. Between 1933 and 1938, (the year of the infamous Crystal Night 9 November, 1938), about half of the Jewish population of about half a million had emigrated. “Metaphysically as well as materially, the roots of the German heaven were deeply embedded in the Jewish hell” (Grunberger, 579).

The first concentration camps came up in 1933 under the S.A. After the Roehm purge of June 1934, the camps were turned over to the SS; with guard duty being assigned to the Dearth’s Head units. Thus the names of obscure villages and towns such as Dachau, Auschwitz, and Buchenwald acquired notoriety. The actual process of extermination was begun with the so called euthanasia practised on 70,000 mentally infirm German between 1938 and 1941. In late 1941 this method was applied to concentration camp victims unfit to work — camouflaged gas vans were employed to gas 150,00 Jews. Mass extermination in gas chambers began in Belzec, in Lublin district of Poland in March 1942. Jewish slave labourers were also systematically machine-gunned. The largest camp was Auschwitz-Birkenau, where between 2 to 3 million Jews, along with gypsies, Poles and Soviet prisoners of war were murdered. As Bracher argues, “the genocide of the Jews was not the result of either war or terror. Neither individual guilt, nor internal conflicts, neither a deterrent function nor the necessity of war was the determining factor. The extermination grew out of the biologicistic insanity of Nazi ideology, and for that reason it is completely unlike the terror of revolutions and wars of the past: Here we are faced by the completely impersonal, bureaucratic “extermination of a people classified as a species of inferior subhumans, as ‘vermin’, a problem which the farmer Himmler handled as though it were a biological disease”.

Under the demands of the totalitarian leader state, venerable institutions collapsed, people were wrenched out of their traditional slots. Privileges were done away with, and all authorities that were not derived from or protected by Hitler were smashed. At the same time, Hitler succeeded in muting those anxieties and fears of uprooting that generally accompany any breach with the past.

### Check Your Progress 5

- 1) What was Nazi Party’s attitude towards education and religion?

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2) What according to you are the basic features of the Nazi regime?

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## 13.8 LET US SUM UP

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In this Unit you have learnt the following:

- the basic features of fascist movement;
- the role of war in preparing sociological and psychological conditions of fascism;
- the basic ideological strands that contributed to fascism and its organizational styles; and
- extreme centralization, subordination of institution like church, army and the judiciary.

We should understand fascism as distinct from conservative right wing movements, as a radical attempt to restructure society and its institutions. We also traced the political antecedents of fascism. It is not correct to see the fascist movement as a kind of catastrophe which erupted suddenly with the Great Depression. Although the Depression provided ideal conditions for growth of fascism, its roots lay in the 19<sup>th</sup> century Europe and the World War. You also studied the specific variations in fascist movements using examples of Italy, France, Spain, Germany, etc. The emergence of fascist regime in Italy and Germany was analyzed in greater detail and the nature of State was specifically dealt with. Under Hitler Germany represented the ugly face of fascist regime in terms of suppression and annihilation.

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## 13.9 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS EXERCISES

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### Check Your Progress 1

- 1) See Section 13.2.
- 2) See Section 13.2.
- 3) Your answer must focus on the ideological novelty of fascism and use of modern mass mobilization techniques and fascist attempted institutional change and contrast these with right-wing conservatism. See Section 13.2.

### Check Your Progress 2

- 1) See Sub-section 13.3.1.
- 2) See Sub-section 13.3.2 and 13.3.4.
- 3) You should compare their approaches to the Jewish question. See Sub-section 13.3.4.

**Check Your Progress 3**

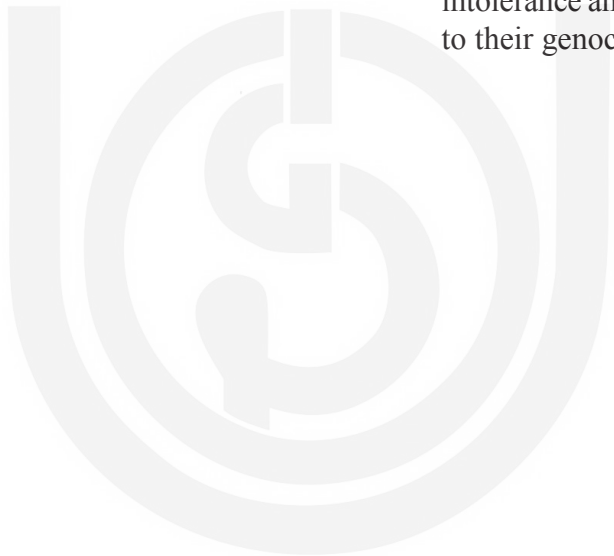
- 1) See Section 13.4.
- 2) See Section 13.4, especially Section on Hungarian right-wing movement.

**Check Your Progress 4**

- 1) See Section 13.5.
- 2) See Section 13.5.
- 3) In your answer you should mention the crisis of the Weimer Republic, the impact of the economic crisis and the subsequent political instability. See Section 13.5.

**Check Your Progress 5**

- 1) See Section 13.7.
- 2) A totalitarian regime, complete subordinate of society to state and to one party, all power in the hand of the Fuehrer, a conservative and discriminatory attitude towards women, total state control over art, literature and other forms of culture, education to be used only as Nazis propaganda, religious intolerance and above all, an attitude of utmost contempt for the Jews leading to their genocide. See Section 13.7.



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