Nazism : Main ideas and features

Nazism was a totalitarian movement started by Adolf Hitler. Like Fascism of Italy, Nazism also believed in intense nationalism, mass appeal and dictatorial rule. Nazism as an ideology, gained popularity as Germany had faced a crushing defeat in the First World War. The harsh terms of Treaty of Versailles followed by the Great Depression left Germany on the brink of collapse. It was at this time that Hitler's ferocious nationalism grew. Hitler believed that the Treaty of Versailles had been revengeful, humiliating and extremely harsh. So, he began propaganda of revenge and his call for rearmament of the military. In his personal testament *Mein Kampf* Hitler identified his practical aims and his theories of race and propaganda. Hitler devised a new style of politics. He understood the significance of rituals and spectacle in mass mobilisation. Nazis held massive rallies and public meetings to demonstrate the support for Hitler and instill a sense of unity among the people. The Red banners with the Swastika, the Nazi salute, and the ritualised rounds of applause after the speeches—were all part of this spectacle of power.

It rejected ideas of liberalism, equality before the law, human rights and democracy. It did not believe in international peace and cooperation. It emphasized on subordination of the individual before the state and the inequality of human race.

The main features of Nazism were:

- The state is above all. All powers should be with the state and it should have hold on all the political, social and economic programmes. The belief was that *"People exist for the state rather than the state for the people."*

- To end the parliamentary institutions.
- To have control over education, Press, radio, etc. and to maintain its own power.
- To crush all sorts of party formations and opposition.
- To root out Communism and Liberalism.
- The right to private property was recognised only upto a limit which was not harmful to the national interests.
- To mobilise private and state efforts for the development of agriculture and industries etc.
- The Nazi Party considered Germany superior to all other nation and wanted to have her influence all over the world. It was of the view that the *stronger must rule and not fuse with the weaker and so sacrifice its own greatness.*"
- To turn out the Jews from Germany, as they were a great cause of the economic hardship of the people of Germany.
- To denounce the degrading Treaty of Versailles.
- Expansion of the German Empire and to regain all colonies that she had acquired before the war.
- To increase the German military power.

Picture Study

1. What does this picture depict about ideology of Hitler?

(a) He understood the significance of rituals and spectacles in mass mobilisation

(b) Appeasement (c) Aggression (d) Humiliation

2. What does this picture suggest?

(a) Owning a car was a dream for common man

(b) Owning a car was no longer just a dream for an ordinary worker

(c) Racial discrimination against Jews

(d) Hitler's power

3. In the image given the police is escorting the gypsies to the Auschwitz camp. Why do you think the police is taking the gypsies to the camp?

(a) To give them proper food and shelter

(b) To remove the undesirables by killing them in a concentration camp

(c) To imprison them as they were criminals

(d) To fight in the war