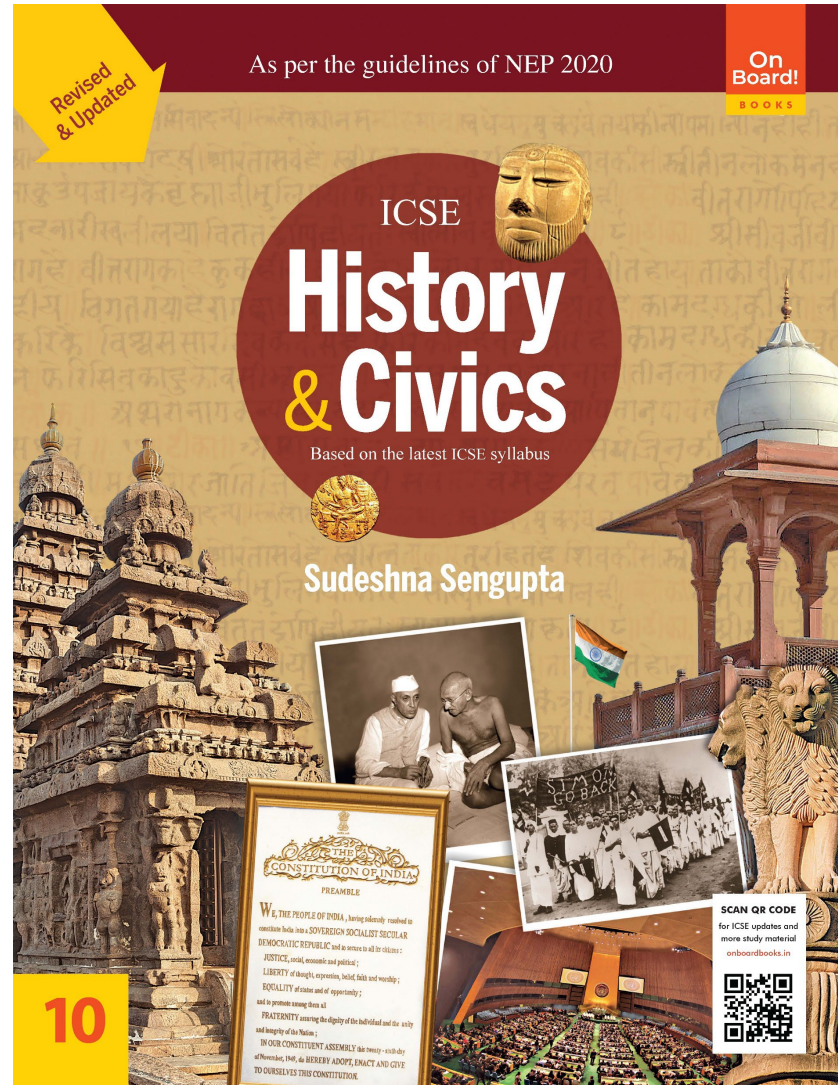


On Board!

B O O K S

ICSE History and Civics 10



Section B: History

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Chapter 11 Rise of Dictatorships and the Second World War

The inter-war period (1919–1939) saw the rise of dictatorship in Italy and Germany. Though the First World War was fought to ‘make the world safe for democracy’, the unsettled economic and political conditions after the First World War paved the way for the massacre of democracy in both these countries.

There were several common factors in both Italy and Germany, which led to the rise of Fascism and Nazism. These were:

- Dissatisfaction with the humiliating peace treaties
- Economic crisis
- Inefficient and weak democratic system
- Political instability

Dictatorship is an antithesis of democracy.

- It gives no rights to people
- It tolerates neither opposition nor criticism
- It envisages one party rule, controlled by one leader with total authority
- The individual, his freedom, his very thinking is controlled by the state.

MEANING AND PRINCIPLES OF FASCISM

The main principles of Fascism are:

- Opposition to democracy, rights and liberties of the people. Emphasis is on duties and obligations.
- Rule of a single party and a single leader, with full authority.
- Absence of opposition. No criticism of the leader is allowed.
- The state is more important than the individual.
- Emphasis is laid on nationalism, national spirit and national unity.

Causes of the rise of Fascism in Italy

Dissatisfaction with the peace treaties Italy had joined the First World War on the side of Britain and France in 1915. It hoped to get large territories but it received nothing from the Paris Peace Treaties. So a feeling developed among the Italians that they 'had won the War, but lost the peace'. Italians felt cheated by their War-time Allies.

Economic crisis The War had caused a great economic strain on Italy's economy. Unemployment, less salaries, terrible working conditions, steep price rise, and inflation were the order of the day. There were frequent strikes. Such a situation reduced production and added to the miseries of the common people. Moreover, war debts and deficit budgets hit them badly. There were even food riots. It appeared as if Italy was heading towards a communist revolution on the Russian lines. So the capitalists in Italy gave financial support to Fascism.

Inefficient and weak democratic governments A parliamentary government, based on male adult franchise, was introduced in Italy for the first time, which failed to give a clear majority to any political party. There came a series of short-lived coalition governments in Italy, with neither consistency nor continuity in the policies. There were frequent strikes and riots that the government was not able to deal with effectively. People wanted strong leadership to handle the crisis. This was provided by the Fascist Party under its leader, Benito Mussolini.

Mussolini's Fascism Against the recurring political instability and economic stagnation, Benito Mussolini formed the Fascist Party in March 1919.

- He emphasized that a strong state was necessary to take Italy forward.
- He supported aggressive nationalism.
- He believed that a nation emerged stronger through war and by conquering weaker nations.
- He attracted people from all walks of life like ex-soldiers, salaried persons, farmers, workers and youths who formed groups called Fascios.
- He found that the capitalists and the industrialists were willing to give him financial help, if he fought against the communists and the socialists.

Rise of Mussolini

Benito Mussolini had many followers who indulged in violence. King Victor Emmanuel III of Italy was forced to invite Mussolini to become the Prime Minister and form the government. The king gradually became a nominal head, while Mussolini became the real ruler of Italy. By 1924, he became all powerful. Mussolini declared himself as the Il Duce, i.e. the leader of the country. He began a reign of terror.

Impact of the rise of Fascist dictatorship

Restoration of law and order Mussolini restored law and order by banning all other political parties, except his Fascist Party.

Economic reforms and prosperity Mussolini reduced government expenditure, improved transport and communication and reclaimed land for agriculture. He set up many factories, gave better facilities to workers and increased the country's production.

Boost to Italy as a great power Mussolini promoted national spirit in Italy through his Fascios. He made military training compulsory for the youth. He also followed a vigorous and an aggressive foreign policy, with a view to enhancing the prestige and glory of Italy in the world community. All this, however, did not help Mussolini and Italy much. Italy joined the Second World War against Britain and France on 10 June 1940, and was defeated. Rome was conquered by the Allies in 1944.

NAZISM IN GERMANY

After the defeat in the First World War, Germany also faced economic crisis, revolts, lawlessness, unemployment and price rise much like Italy. Kaiser Wilhelm II, unable to solve these problems, was forced to abdicate. He fled the country. A new Constituent Assembly set up a democratic republic, known as the Weimar Republic, which collapsed when Hitler came to power.

Factors leading to the rise of Nazism

Political instability in Germany Under the Weimar Republic, there was political instability. Democracy failed to give any relief to the people. In contrast, Hitler promised a stable and strong government. He won the support of the people.

Reaction to the humiliating Treaty of Versailles The Treaty of Versailles imposed very humiliating terms on Germany, in the form of paying huge war penalties to the victors, ceding large slices of German territory to them including her overseas colonies and disbanding the German army. The people began to look down upon the Weimar Republic as a symbol of national disgrace.

Economic disaster Unemployment, inflation, price rise, ruination of German trade and industry, coupled with general world depression and economic slump created economic hardship of the worst order in Germany. Hitler promised relief to the people on the economic front and he won their confidence.

Threat of communism The communists in Germany tried to stage a revolution on the pattern of the Russian Revolution of 1917. Hitler exposed the communists before the people. As a result, they preferred to join the Nazi Party rather than the Communist Party.

Hitler's volunteer corps The soldiers of the German army, after being disbanded under the terms of the Treaty of Versailles, formed Hitler's Volunteer Corps. With their help, Hitler was able to crush the opposition.

Hitler's dynamic personality Hitler had a dynamic personality. He was influential and charming. He was a great organizer, an excellent orator and a tireless worker. His logic was convincing and his appeals touched the reasons and emotions of the people.

Hitler's Nazism

Hitler's cult, his creed and philosophy came to be known as Nazism. The following are its main features.

- People exist for the state, and not the other way round. He believed in a totalitarian state.
- To tolerate no opposition or criticism and to allow no party formation other than his own.
- To put an end to parliamentary institutions and democratic government.
- To exercise full control on education, press, radio and other means of propaganda.
- To crush communism and liberalism.
- To uphold the belief in the superiority of the German race and blood and to establish that it was their destiny to rule over inferior races of the world.
- To turn out the Jews from Germany, because they had caused great hardship to Germans during the First World War.
- To denounce the Treaty of Versailles as disgraceful and to regain the lost German territories.
- To make Germany a strong military power and to carry the Swastika mark all over the world.
- To inculcate the spirit of nationalism among the people.

Hitler's rise to power

The rise of the Nazi Party and the rise of Hitler to power are interlinked. He fought on the German side in the First World War. He got the 'Iron Cross' for his bravery. In 1919, Hitler joined a small political group, called the German Workers' Party in Munich. He changed the name of the party to National Socialist German Workers Party (Nazis) which became more famous by the name of the Nazi Party.

In 1923, Hitler was arrested and jailed for attempting a coup but was released the next year. While in prison, he wrote his famous autobiography named *Mein Kampf* (My Struggle). After his release from the jail, Hitler set to reorganize the Nazi Party from 1925 to 1929. In the election of July 1932, the Nazis polled the maximum votes.

The Nazi Party made the functioning of the coalition government headed by Von Papen impossible. Ultimately, President Hindenburg of Germany was compelled to appoint Hitler as the Chancellor (i.e. the Prime Minister) of the coalition government in January 1933. Hitler ordered fresh elections.

Hitler got the Enabling Bill passed, which authorized his government to take any action without seeking the approval of the Reichstag. Thus, without even having a majority, Hitler became All-powerful. After the death of the president, Hitler combined in his own person the offices of the Chancellor and the President. From then onwards, he assumed the title of the *Fuhrer*, i.e. the Leader, and became the absolute dictator of Germany.

Domestic policies

Setting up a strong Germany Germany became a dictatorship, with all powers in the hands of her leader. All opposition parties abolished, criticism disallowed, rights denied to the people, democracy crushed, and a secret police under the name of Gestapo established to spy over everyone. Those suspected of disloyalty to the Fuhrer were executed without a proper trial. The Germans were told that Hitler was Germany and Germany was Hitler.

Economic reforms and development work Hitler proceeded to reorganize and reconstruct German economy and administration. In order to provide employment to the people, he created new jobs and expanded the bureaucracy, so required to execute his plans of reconstruction. More factories and agricultural farms were set up. In this way, he provided both work and bread to his people. Hitler ordered the production of heavy armaments at a large-scale and introduced compulsory military service.

Anti-Jew policies The Nazi Party and Hitler showed a great dislike for the Jews, whom they held responsible for Germany's defeat in the First World War. He put a large number of Jews in concentration camps. They were denied German citizenship, dismissed from government jobs and prohibited from practising medicine, law and other professions. Their shops were looted and their properties were confiscated. Hitler wanted to eliminate the Jewish race completely.

Foreign policies

Disregard of the Treaty of Versailles Hitler had started rearmament and compulsory military service, in gross violation of the Treaty of Versailles.

An imperialist and expansionist foreign policy Hitler had imperialist designs and wanted to establish the rule of Germany over the world. He signed many treaties with various countries. He also concluded the Non-Aggression Pact with Russia in 1939. He seized a part of Czechoslovakia with the connivance of Britain and France.

End of the dictator When Hitler attacked Poland on 1 September 1939, Britain and France issued an ultimatum to Germany, which he ignored. Thus, began the Second World War in which Germany was totally defeated by the Allied Powers. She surrendered in 1945. Hitler is said to have committed suicide. With his death, Nazism and the Nazi regime came to an end.

Similarities between Italy and Germany

- The politico-economic situations of both the countries were linked and almost identical; for example, there prevailed political instability in both the countries; the governments in both the countries had failed to solve the common problems of the people.
- The peace treaties signed after the First World War were humiliating for both the countries.
- The communist threat to political power loomed large over both the countries. They resorted to strikes and sabotages.
- Hitler's volunteers wore Brown Shirts, while Mussolini's volunteers wore Black Shirts.
- Both Hitler and Mussolini formed their own parties, e.g. the Nazi Party of Hitler and the Fascist Party of Mussolini.
- Mussolini and Hitler were nationalists and patriots of the highest order.
- Both promised relief to their people.

Similarities in the aims of Fascism and Nazism

- Both Mussolini and Hitler aimed at restoring the status and dignity of their nations by making them strong powers.
- Both wanted to solve the post-war problems of their countries and relieve the people of the economic crisis.
- Both aimed at providing strong, stable and efficient governments.
- Both wanted to undo the injustice done to their respective countries by the peace treaties after the War.
- Both aimed at protecting their countries from the communist designs of capturing power through staging a revolution.
- Both aimed at industrial peace by controlling workers' strikes.

THE SECOND WORLD WAR

Roughly about twenty years and nine months after the end of the First World War, the Second World War broke out on 1 September 1939.

Causes of the Second World War

Failure of democracies in Europe and rise of dictatorships The peculiar problems created after the First World War could not be successfully tackled by the democratic governments. In countries like Italy, Germany, Russia, Spain, Portugal and others, dictators rose to power.

Unjust and humiliating Treaty of Versailles The victors of the First World War (Britain, France and USA) forced Germany to sign the unjust and humiliating Treaty of Versailles. It imposed heavy war-penalties on Germany, made her surrender large chunks of her territories. The Treaty also prohibited Germany from rearming herself; her army was disbanded.

Aggressive nationalism and expansionism The rulers of Germany, Italy and Japan believed in aggressive nationalism. They also wanted to acquire colonies for their countries to satisfy their nationalist urges and to further their economic interests. Again there was a war between China and Japan in 1937, and many Chinese cities fell into Japanese hands. The war was motivated by a long-standing Japanese imperialist policy aiming to dominate China politically and militarily and to secure its vast mineral and economic resources. The League of Nations failed to check the aggressive policies of these countries.

The armament race In order to achieve their territorial aims, Germany, Italy and Japan began producing firearms, tanks, guns, warships, aircrafts and other weapons of destruction at a large scale. The Disarmament Conferences failed to stop the stockpiling of the arms and ammunition. The League of Nations also did not achieve any success in this regard.

Weakness of the League of Nations The League of Nations was set up to maintain peace in the world. But it failed in its objective.

US policy of isolationism After the First World War, USA kept herself aloof from European politics. As a result, Britain alone could not check the imperialistic attitude of some European nations. American aloofness and her non-interference helped the totalitarian regimes of Germany and Italy to pursue their aggressive and militant policy.

The policy of appeasement Britain and France followed a policy of appeasement towards Germany. They did not care to enforce the terms of the Treaty of Versailles, when Hitler started to flout them openly. The Czechs were persuaded to accept the Munich Pact in the name of world peace. But actually, they were appeasing Hitler at the cost of Czechoslovakia. Thus, the Anglo-French policy of appeasement proved dangerous for world peace.

Immediate cause

German invasion of Poland The immediate cause of the outbreak of the Second World War was Germany's aggression on Poland. Britain asked Germany to vacate Poland, but Hitler refused to do so. Consequently, on 3 September 1939, Britain and France declared war against Germany and thus began the Second World War.

MAIN EVENTS OF THE WAR

German troops captured Holland, Belgium and France, and a large territory in North Africa. By 1941, Hitler had overrun the whole of eastern Europe and reached right up to the outskirts of Moscow. After the German attack on Pearl Harbour in December 1941, the British Air Force with the help of USA caused a great damage to the German air power. On 6 August 1945, America dropped an atom bomb on Hiroshima and on 9 August 1945, she dropped the second bomb on Nagasaki. Japan surrendered soon thereafter. The Second World War came to an end.

Consequences of the Second World War

Defeat of the Axis Powers Germany stood broken, humiliated and devastated. It was divided into two parts, i.e. the East and West Germany. The German army was reduced. Her war criminals were tried and duly punished. Some were even executed. Nazism came to an end. The Japanese Emperor was stripped of his authority. American General Mac Arthur was given complete control over Japan. Japan's army was disbanded and arsenal destroyed. Her fleet was also destroyed by the American warships. Similarly, Italy too was defeated.

Unprecedented death and destruction and the bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki

Million of soldiers were either killed or wounded. Millions of civilians were also killed. Many big cities with imposing buildings were reduced to debris. The two Japanese cities, Hiroshima and Nagasaki continued to reel under the radiation effects of the atom bombs. These not only brought death for millions, but caused diseases. The radioactive dust contaminated the natural resources as it killed animals and destroyed the ecology. Vast areas of land were rendered unworthy of cultivation and human habitation. Some of these effects have continued even to the present day.

Lowering of the prestige of Britain and France Though both Britain and France had won the War, they were badly ravaged. The War proved too much of a strain on both of them. War-weary and exhausted,

Emergence of USA and Soviet Union as superpowers The USA had played a decisive role in the victory of the Allied Powers, especially as she was the only nuclear power in the world. By using the atom bombs to crush Japan, she had emerged as a military and economic superpower. The Soviet Union emerged as another superpower in the post-Second World War period. Russia's territories were greatly expanded. Russia became a dominant power in world politics. She became the leader of the Communist Bloc.

Two power blocs in the post-World War The post-War world stood divided into two power blocs – the American Bloc and the Soviet Bloc. The world thus had become bipolar as it was grouped into capitalist nations and the socialist nations, headed by the US and the USSR respectively. They were also known as the Democratic Bloc and the Communist Bloc. The two superpowers sought to strengthen their respective spheres of influence through building military alliances. The North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) led by the US, which was formed in 1949, was a major milestone.

The relations between the two power blocs were characterised by a situation of constant conflicts and tension as well as a frantic race for armament and proxy wars. This is known as cold war in contemporary world history which continued for nearly half a century, since the end of the Second War till the disintegration of the Soviet Union in 1991.

Resurgence of nationalism in Asia and Africa As the War shattered the colonial empires of Britain, France, Portugal, Germany and Italy, a desire for freedom gained ground in the people of their colonies in Asia and Africa. India, Burma, Sri Lanka, Malaya, which were under Britain, became free.

Nuremberg and Tokyo trials The Allied Powers decided that those responsible for war crimes against humanity during the Second World War must be brought to trial and punished. Similar trials were held in Tokyo in Japan to punish the Japanese war criminals.

Birth of the United Nations Organization Humankind looked for a better, happier and a more peaceful world after it had witnessed the holocaust, the widespread destruction and death in the Second World War. To save the coming generations from the scourge of war, the United Nations Organization (UNO) was established on 24 October 1945, with its headquarters in New York (USA). Peace, human dignity, justice, brotherhood and cooperation were the key concepts that were adopted. It emerged as the successor to the League of Nations to try and maintain world peace; on the whole, it has been more successful than its predecessor in maintaining international peace and security as well as ushering in global development banishing poverty.

To Remember

Introduction – Rise of dictatorship in Italy and Germany, Meaning of Fascism and its principles: It is derived from the word 'fasces' meaning bundle of rods, signifying strength, unity and authority.

Mussolini – Policies: Against democracy, rule of a single party or one-man, no opposition, state more important, no individual liberty, national spirit dominant, supported an imperialistic foreign policy.

Factors behind the rise of Fascism – Dissatisfaction with the peace treaties, economic crisis, inefficient and weak democratic governments, fascist propaganda.

Factors behind the rise of Nazism – Political instability in Germany, humiliation caused by the Treaty of Versailles, economic disaster, threat of communism, Hitler's volunteer corps, Hitler's dynamic personality.

Hitler – Policies: NAZI-National Socialist German Workers Party formed by Adolf Hitler, state most important, no opposition, against democracy, control over education and press, anti-liberalism, superiority of the German race, Jews thrown out of Germany, denounced Treaty of Versailles, made Germany a superpower, growth of nationalism, vigorous domestic and foreign policy.

The Second World War – Causes: Failure of democracies in Europe and rise of dictatorships, humiliating terms of the Treaty of Versailles, aggressive nationalism and expansionism, the armament race, weakness of the League, US policy of isolationism, policy of appeasement, Immediate cause: Invasion of Poland, Consequences: Defeat of the Axis Powers, unprecedented death and destruction, lowered the prestige of Britain and France, emergence of USA and the Soviet Union as superpowers, two power blocs, nationalism in Asia and Africa, Nuremberg and Tokyo trials, United Nations Organization formed.

Thank You