

Fascism and Nazism

I. What Are Fascism and Nazism?

As defined by *Wikipedia*, “fascism is a form of far right, authoritarian, ultra-nationalism, characterized by dictatorial power, forcible suppression of opposition, and strong regimentation of society and of the economy.” ... Fascists believe that liberal democracy is obsolete and regard the complete mobilization of society under a **totalitarian one-party state** as necessary to prepare a nation for armed conflict and to respond effectively to economic difficulties. Such a state is led by a strong leader to forge national unity and maintain a stable and orderly society. Fascism views political violence, war and imperialism as means that can achieve national rejuvenation. Fascists advocate a mixed economy, although with government control, with the principal goal of achieving national economic self-sufficiency.”

While a dictatorship tries to control people’s actions, totalitarianism tries to control people’s actions and thoughts.

Since the state is supreme, fascism tries to either eliminate all other forms of loyalty, such as church, family, unions, other political parties, and opposition political parties, or to get them to serve the state completely. “Fascism redrew the frontiers between private and public, sharply diminishing what had once been untouchably private. It changed the practice of citizenship from the enjoyment of constitutional rights and duties to participation in mass ceremonies of affirmation and conformity. It reconfigured relations between the individual and the collectivity, so that an individual had no rights outside community interest. It expanded the powers of the executive—party and state—in a bid for total control. Finally, it unleashed aggressive emotions hitherto known in Europe only during war or social revolution.” (*Wikipedia*) It is a mass movement and a form of populism.

Just as Communism is a form of Socialism, Nazism is a form of Fascism, but incorporates fervent anti-Semitism, anti-communism, scientific racism, and eugenics into its creed. “Nazism subscribed to pseudo-scientific theories of racial hierarchy and Social Darwinism, identifying the Germans as a part of what the Nazis regarded as an Aryan or Nordic master race. It aimed to overcome social divisions and create a German homogeneous society based on racial purity, which represented a people's community (*Volksgemeinschaft*). The Nazis aimed to unite all Germans living in historically German territory, as well as gain additional lands for German expansion under the doctrine of *Lebensraum* and exclude those who they deemed either community aliens or ‘inferior’ races.” (*Wikipedia*)

Nazi Values

1. One Nation, One People, One Ruler
2. Ultrationalism -- the State over the individual
3. Community (Volk)
4. Race (as definition of state and community)
5. One party -- therefore anti-democracy

6. Camaraderie (from the experience of WWI)
7. Law and Order
8. Discipline
9. Pride
10. The Charismatic rule
11. A military model of society
12. Action for its own sake

Methods of organization and control

1. Everyone involved in different aspects of the movement
2. Unify against a common enemy
3. Terror -- through the SA, SS, Gestapo

II. Fascism and Nazism are products of the 20th Century – Review previous units.

A. Social Darwinism – as a way of justifying different forms of privileged elites, Imperialism, racism, and war. Other precursors include the Genocide of the American Indians and Armenians, slavery, etc.

B. World War I (review Psychology of War)

1. For the fascists, World War I was a unifying force, often created the camaraderie on the front not found in domestic society.
2. The war forced conformity and greater government control and expectations of governments should do.
3. Propaganda and the dehumanization of the enemy. The We vs. They mentality
4. The brutality and dog-eat-dog world of war destroyed ideas of rationality and liberalism.
5. War and mass mobilization of society became ways of solving problems.
6. The post-war world was seen by conservatives as one of immorality and anything goes. Fascism would create order and restore respectability (especially towards women).

“Fascists saw World War I as a revolution that brought massive changes to the nature of war, society, the state, and technology. The advent of **total war** and the total mass mobilization of society had broken down the distinction between civilians and combatants. A "military citizenship" arose in which all citizens were involved with the military in some manner during the war. The war had resulted in the rise of a powerful state capable of mobilizing millions of people to serve on the front lines and providing economic production and logistics to support them, as well as having unprecedented authority to intervene in the lives of citizens.” (*Wikipedia*)

C. The Growth of Mass society, with technological methods to influence thought and behavior (propaganda) coupled with social, political and economic chaos and wars create a feeling that the individual can no longer control his or her environment. Eric Fromm argued that these historical changes led to people wanting to give up their freedom and let others make decisions.

III. Why was there Nazism in Germany?

A. Historical pressures

1. Loss of World War I (30.7 million killed or wounded throughout Europe) -- War was never fought on German soil; Spring Offensive and sudden collapse -> Myths of November Criminals and Stab in the Back.

2. Blockade continued after the war starving and killing many

3. Revolution of 1918 -- Communists and Freikorps

4. Treaty of Versailles

5. Kapp Putsch

6. Inflation -- 1914 - \$1 = 4 marks; Nov., 1923 - \$1. = 4.2 trillion marks

7. Hitler's Putsch

8. Short period of stabilization

9. Depression (World Economic Crisis)

B. All had the effect of weakening the Weimar government -- lack of loyalty -- lack of feelings of control over one's own destiny or environment -- no future -- decadence

C. Nazi Platform (see below)

D. Hitler become Chancellor on Jan. 30, 1933 --> Dictator by 1934

1. Elimination of all opposition

2. *Führer* Principle

3. Organization of the population in Nazi Organization

4. Use of Jews as common enemy

5. Hitler Got Germany out of the Depression – (Analyze The World Economic Crisis and Unemployment in Germany) By 1938, over 1/2 of the budget went to arms build up -- fixed prices, set production quotas, created 4 Year plans; abolished forces of marketplace; created a self-sufficient economy and full employment.

6. "In 1934, Hitler described his goal of creating a block for Germans in the middle of Europe. Surrounding European countries would be exploited for their food and labor while being politically subordinate to Nazi rule. In these occupied territories, he would create a slave people without independent political, social, economic or cultural life. Extermination squads and famine would rid the area of all 'dangerous' and 'subhuman' populations, while the SS would populate the Reich with 'racially pure' stock. To consolidate his power in the Reich, Hitler used terror, education, and biological selection within the totalitarian state to insure that his goals were carried out." (*Facing History and Ourselves*)

Ten Major Points of the 25 Point Nazi Program -- Feb., 25, 1920

1. A union of all Germans to form a great Germany on the basis of self-determination of peoples.

2. Abolition of the Treaty of Versailles.

3. Land and territory (colonies) for our surplus population.

4. German blood as a requirement for German citizenship. New Jew can be a member of the nation.

5. Non-citizens live in Germany as foreigners only, subject to the law of aliens.

6. Only citizens can vote or hold public office.

7. The state insures that every citizen live decently and earn his livelihood. If it is impossible to provide food for the whole population, then aliens must be expelled.

8. No further immigration of non-Germans.

9. A thorough reconstruction of our national system of education. The science of citizenship shall be taught from the beginning.

10. All newspapers must be published in the German language by German citizens and owners.

IV. The Appeal of Nazism

Nazism appealed first to those who have no place in the existing society and especially to those who had a place and felt that they were losing their status and standing including, the lower middle class, small businessmen, small farmers (pressured from big business and big labor; fear of Bolshevism and losing their place to the proletariat. They often opposed what they saw as the decadent culture of the Weimar Republic.)

Unemployed – The Nazi SA gave them a place and an income

Former and present military – The Treaty of Versailles limited the size of the army. The military never fully supported the Weimar Government.

Industrialists – Especially during the Depression, they thought the Nazis were a bulwark against Communism. The Nazis would control the Communists, and they would control Hitler and the Nazis.

Nationalists – Other right-wing parties

Youth -- want a change and a place in society. Nazism was seen as new hope for a new Germany.

Anti-Semites, Anti-Communists, Anti-Allies – Nazis placed the blame of all of Germany's problems on these groups (scapegoating). When Hitler became Chancellor in 1933, only 1% of the German population was Jewish.

Charismatic Leader – The Fuhrer.

Propaganda – Torchlight parades, military pageantry, control of media, use of the radio, etc.

Indifference or fear of getting involved.

“All that is necessary for the forces of evil to win in the world is for enough good men to do nothing.” -- Edmund Burke

“The world is too dangerous to live in -- not because of the people who do evil, but because of the people who sit and let it happen.” -- Albert Einstein

“In Germany, the Nazis first came for the Communists, and I did not speak up because I wasn't a Communist.

Then they came for the Jews, and I did not speak up because I wasn't a Jew.

Then they came for the trade unionists, and I did not speak up because I wasn't a trade unionist.

Then they came for the Catholics, and I did not speak up because I was a Protestant.

Then they came for me, and by that time, there was no one left to speak for me.”

– Martin Niemoeller