

NAZISM IN GERMANY, 1933 - 1945

Nazism was a dictatorial political movement or ideology in Germany that was established by Adolf Hitler under the Nazi party after the collapse of the Weimar Republic. This political movement led Germany between 1933 and 1945 when Adolf Hitler and his Nazi party controlled the country through dictatorship. Nazism shared many elements with Italian fascism that was established by Benito Mussolini.

Adolf Hitler, who became the leader of Nazi Germany up to 1945, was born in the town of Brannau in Austria in 1889 to a customs official. He served in the German army during World War I. When the war ended, Hitler joined the National Socialist German Workers' Party formed in January 1919 in Munich town. Its initial membership was composed of the discontented people in Germany like the unemployed and demobilized soldiers. Given his oratory or good speaking skills, Adolf Hitler quickly dominated and eventually became the head of this party. The party later became the Nazi Party in 1923.

Adolf Hitler promised to overthrow the Versailles Peace Treaty of 1919 which had humiliated Germany and to revive the German prestige and power in Europe. Adolf Hitler always criticized the Weimar Republic blaming it for the suffering of the Germans and in 1923 he attempted a coup against the republic but failed and was sentenced to five years imprisonment, although released after only six months. Under Adolf Hitler, the Nazi party became very strong to the extent that by 1933, the strength and threat of Hitler's Nazi party forced President Hindenburg to appoint him as a Chancellor which led the Nazi Party and Hitler into power by 1933.

FACTORS FOR THE RISE OF ADOLF HITLER AND NAZISM TO POWER IN GERMANY

The following factors explain the rise of Adolf Hitler and the Nazism in Germany;

The negative effects of World War I on Germany led to the rise of Adolf Hitler to power. The war left Germany economically weakened which created misery, confusion and general turmoil in the country and this gave birth to the Nazi party. The climax of World War I was the Versailles Peace Treaty of 1919, which among other things forced Germany to accept the war guilt clause, to lose all her colonies, her military and naval strength and some of her cherished territories in Europe. This hurt the nationalistic feelings of many patriotic Germans who became discontented and vowed to overthrow the Weimar Republic that accepted these humiliating terms. The Nazi party and Hitler himself exploited these grievances to win support from the masses which enabled him to come to power.

The weaknesses of the Weimar Republic led to the rise of Hitler to power. This was the republican government that was set up in Germany in 1919 following the resignation of Kaiser William II in 1918 and his subsequent escape to Holland. The government was characterized which undermined its credibility. For example, right from the start, the republic was unpopular because it accepted the harsh and unpopular Versailles Peace Treaty of 1919. This was quickly exploited by Adolf Hitler to turn the Germans against the republic as he blamed it for having accepted a harsh treaty whose terms had greatly affected Germany. Adolf Hitler therefore promised to rebuild a strong Germany without such humiliations which undermined the Weimar Republic, thus facilitating his rise to power.

The Weimar Republic also failed to restore Alsace and Lorraine to Germany which created discontent among the Germans who therefore decided to support Adolf Hitler. Germany had got these provinces which were rich in coal and iron from France through war. However, they were restored to France at the end of World War I. Adolf Hitler therefore criticized the Weimar Republic for this because their exploitation would have helped her to develop her industries especially the disastrous World War I. This also made Hitler popular in Germany.

Besides, the Weimar Republic failed to control the problem of inflation which affected Germany by 1923. Germany had lost most of her industries during World War I and this created scarcity of goods in the country. The German economy was further weakened by the French invasion of the Ruhr industrial region in January 1923. As a result, the prices of goods rose up. The government printed a new paper money which was put in circulation so as to stabilize the currency but the problem of inflation continued. Hitler exploited this to criticize the Weimar Republic as weak and therefore he got a lot of support which enabled him to rise to power.

The republic also had weak leaders who failed to stop violence in Germany since 1920. As a result, law and order broke down throughout the country, hence making it possible for the opposition groups such as the Nazi party to succeed. By 1933, President Hindenburg decided to appoint Hitler a Chancellor, hoping that he would use him both to stop the violence and also to maintain the Weimar Republic in power. Instead, Hitler exploited such weakness to capture power in Germany.

The fear or threat of Communism led to the rise of Hitler and Nazism in Germany. Nazism was opposed to communism as an economic system which advocated for the state control of businesses and giving much power to the workers. This fear therefore forced the industrialists and other wealthy Germans to support Adolf Hitler and the Nazi party to come to power so as to protect their private property or wealth.

The Economic Depression of 1929–1935 created conditions that favoured the rise of Adolf Hitler and Nazism. Between 1929 and 1935, the world was experiencing a devastating economic down turn, known as the Great Economic Depression. The negative effects of this Great Economic Depression like massive unemployment and poverty due the collapse of banks and industries created misery or suffering which increased the popularity of the Nazi party as Hitler blamed the Weimar Republic for all the suffering that the Germans were going through. As a result, many angry Germans supported Hitler and the Nazi party to come to power hoping that they would solve the problems caused by the depression.

The role of the Nazi Storm Troopers or the Brown shirts enabled Hitler to rise to power. This was a Nazi terrorist squad or group organized by Hitler's supporters like Ernest Roehm. They promoted violence in the country and intimidated the enemies of the Nazi ideology such as the Jews and communists. This weakened the Weimar Republic and forced the Germans to support Adolf Hitler and his activities. Indeed, their presence in the 1932 parliamentary elections intimidated the voters who ended up voting for the Nazi representatives, giving them 107 seats. It was also their threats to President Hindenburg that forced him to appoint Hitler as Chancellor in 1933.

The lack of experience in parliamentary democracy undermined the Weimar Republic, thus enabling Adolf Hitler to rise to power. Traditionally, the Germans loved dictatorship and therefore were used to the authoritarian governments of the kings and the power of the kings was rarely

questioned since it was hereditary. Some Germans therefore considered democracy which was being cherished by the Weimar Republic as a weak form of government not fit for the German nation. As a result, they supported the autocratic Hitler to come to power.

The influence of the Nazi propaganda facilitated the rise of Hitler to power. The Nazi party carried out an extensive propaganda campaign using all the means at their disposal. In their campaigns, they accused the Jews for being non-German, corrupt as well as traitors who betrayed Germany in World War I. They also denounced the communists for being revolutionary and the Versailles Peace Treaty for humiliating Germany. The propaganda was carried out through newspapers and public rallies. With such campaign landing into the ears of people who were already discontented, the Nazi party under Hitler gained a lot of support from the German population which enabled it to come to power.

Hitler's writings facilitated his rise to power. This was because they were in line with the interests of the German people. For example, while in prison in 1923, he wrote a book, "Mein Kampf" - meaning "My Struggle" which became the Nazi Bible. In this book, Hitler promised to address the problems that Germany faced after World War I as well as to create a great German empire covering Europe and Russia. Through his writings, Hitler provided hope to the German population that was for long in a state of despair or misery. This therefore made him popular among the Germans.

The popularity of the Nazi Ideology also facilitated the rise of Hitler to power. The Nazi had the "Twenty-five point Programme" that advocated for German nationalism, elimination of the Jews, territorial expansion by Germany, improving the conditions of the poor and the lower middle class among others. This attracted mass support to the Nazi party which enabled Hitler to come to power by 1933.

Hitler's special personality and oratory power assisted him to rise to power. Hitler was gifted with language and oratory skills which captured the attention of very many Germans especially the discontented people. Through such skills, he convinced the members of the National Socialist German Workers' party to appoint him as their leader in 1920 which was a stepping stone for his rise to power. In addition, as a good mobiliser, Hitler mobilised the masses through public rallies and propaganda campaigns which earned him a lot of fame and support that led to his appointment as the Chancellor of Germany in 1933.

The support of the army enabled Adolf Hitler to rise to power. The Nazi Party under Hitler won admiration from the army men and World War I veterans because it advocated for the revival of the German glory in Europe. These army men therefore supported Adolf Hitler to come to power in Germany by 1933 so as to create a strong Germany once again.

The weakness of his opponents enabled Hitler to come to power in Germany. All the anti-Nazi groups like the communists and Jews were weak and even failed to unite against the Nazi Party under Adolf Hitler.

As a result, there was lack of effective opposition against Adolf Hitler which paved way for its rise to power in Germany.

The support from the press in Germany enabled Adolf Hitler rise to power. The news papers, magazines and other publications extensively covered Adolf Hitler's political rallies which made

him popular among the ordinary Germans. This therefore increased Adolf Hitler's popularity in Germany which helped him to come to power by 1933.

Hitler's negative attitude towards the Jews was responsible for his rise to power in Germany. Adolf Hitler hated the Jews so much and therefore he accused them of many crimes like betraying the German people in World War I as well the economic problems in Germany by then. This won Adolf Hitler mass support in Germany especially from the rich middle class and nationalists which enabled him to come to power by 1933.

The weakness of the League of Nations led to the rise of Hitler to power. The League of Nations which was economically and militarily weak failed to defend the democratic Weimar Republic against its enemies like Adolf Hitler due to its military and economic weakness. Such weakness was eventually exploited by Adolf Hitler to overthrow the Weimar by 1934.

The rise Benito Mussolini in Italy in 1922 was also responsible for the rise of Hitler in Germany. The success of Benito Mussolini in overthrowing the liberal Italian government under King Victor Emmanuel III in 1922 greatly inspired his comrade Adolf Hitler to also overthrow the democratic Weimar Republic in Germany. This therefore facilitated his rise to power by 1933.

The death of President Hindenburg in 1934 directly brought Adolf Hitler to power in Germany. He became the President of the Weimar Republic in 1925 following the death of President Friedrich Ebert and his was the last leader of the Republic. Earlier in January 1933, he had appointed Adolf Hitler Chancellor of Germany so as to satisfy his political ambitions. When he died in August 1934, Adolf Hitler took over the two offices, thus officially coming to power.

NOTE:

Adolf Hitler was appointed Chancellor in January 1933 but President Hindenburg remained the Head of State. When President Hindenburg died in August 1934, Adolf Hitler took over the two offices. He then ruled Germany from 1934 up to 1945 when Germany was defeated by the Allied Powers during World War II.

HOW ADOLF HITLER CONSOLIDATED HIMSELF IN POWER, 1933-1945

Hitler applied several means especially dictatorial ones to retain power until the time of World War II. They included the following:-

He centralized power while in control of Germany. He organised elections on 5th March 1933 by which he centralised powers of administration. He suppressed the communists and all other parties except

Nazi. He blamed the communists for being too violent in character and democrats for being weak politically. This made Hitler a real dictator in Germany. Following the death of President Hindenburg on 2nd August 1934, Hitler became both President and Chancellor of Germany and therefore all authority to govern Germany rested in his hands and a few of his party members.

Hitler made efforts to establish national unity in Germany. He abolished the separate provincial governments in favour of a powerful central government. He therefore established one party rule under the Nazi Party and abolished democracy for the sake of national unity.

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Hitler enrolled many young girls and boys into his Nazi party. This helped him to strengthen his position since their population was big in Germany. This was through encouraging the formation of youth movements like the German Maidens for girls and Hitler's Youths for boys. The Nazi Party therefore had many supporters which helped Adolf Hitler to consolidate power in Germany.

He crashed the opposition which helped him to consolidate power. Hitler hated criticism and opposition to his policies. As a result, he set up a special Nazi police known as the "Gestapo". Using this secret police, the political suspects and enemies of his regime were either imprisoned or killed. Some of the victims of Hitler's terror methods were his associates who had tirelessly served the Nazi party like Ernest Roehm. These were shot by firing squad. This helped him to gain firm control over Germany.

Similarly, Hitler dissolved all the trade unions in Germany in June 1933. These trade unions represented the interests of the workers yet the private businessmen hated the growing power of the workers. Hitler further reduced their power by confiscating their funds as well as imprisoning of their leaders. This made him popular especially among the industrialists.

He used press censorship to consolidate power in Germany. Hitler suppressed public opinion through censoring the means of communication like news papers, radio broadcasting, music, drama, paintings, public films and books in schools. Only Pro-Nazi newspapers and publications were allowed to circulate in Germany. For instance, in 1935 all the forbidden books with anti-Nazi ideas were collected and destroyed in a huge bonfire in Berlin. Similarly, teachers, Professors and religious leaders were warned against spreading anti-Nazi ideas.

Hitler consolidated power in Germany through the persecution of the Jews. Hitler hated the Jews and accused them of having betrayed the German people in World War I. By the Nuremburg Laws of 1935, Hitler embarked on the systematic persecution of the Jews. He began by denying them German citizenship and preventing them from intermarrying with Germans. At the height of his power, the Jews were persecuted for heavy crimes such as failure to show solidarity with the German army in war effort. He also set up concentration camps where many Jews were confined and tortured. By doing so, the Germans thought that Hitler was solving their problems which therefore earned him a lot of support at home.

He modernized the German army and gave it a national outlook. He admitted only German people into the military service and eliminated foreign influences. He increased the size of the German army, acquired modern weapons and also expanded the navy and air forces. This army silenced internal opposition which helped Hitler to consolidate power. The army promoted German interests abroad which equally made Hitler popular. These military reforms however were a violation of the treaty of Versailles of 1919 and were strongly opposed by the other powers like Britain and France. Hitler did not take heed of the international calls for disarmament. Such a policy therefore led to international antagonism and subsequently sparked off World War II.

He dealt with the Catholic Church so as to consolidate power. Though he subjected the church to state control, Hitler made a compromise through signing a treaty with the Pope in 1933 by which the catholic priests would take no interest in politics. Hitler would therefore interfere in the religious matters. Catholic churches were however given the right to run their religious institutions and impart education in their own way. These reforms however did not please all Catholics and

their opposition against government continued. In return, Hitler continued to persecute the Catholics in order to consolidate his power.

He established full state control over educational institutions in Germany in order to promote the Nazi ideology which was the strongest instrument of his power. In the schools, Hitler spread the Nazi propaganda through changing the school curriculum so as to suit the Nazi principles. He therefore used education to brain wash the minds of the Germans so that they might walk in his footsteps. This enabled him to consolidate his position but left many dissatisfied with his policies.

Hitler initiated major infrastructural projects of public works. These projects included the building of government offices, stadiums, art galleries as well as housing developments. He concerned himself personally in the architectural designs for these projects, picking Albert Speer as his favourite assistant. Among these were the enormous stadiums and meeting halls built on the outskirts of Nuremburg town for the annual party congresses. This earned Hitler massive support.

Hitler introduced economic reforms which promoted economic development in Germany. Factories were set up to provide employment opportunities and acts or laws were passed to improve the labour conditions. With the help of the German scientists, arms, ammunition, steamships and aeroplanes were manufactured in Germany. He also restricted imports so as to protect the German industries. The Jews were expelled from the government jobs and replaced by Germans. All this led to economic prosperity and therefore increased the popularity of Adolph Hitler.

Similarly, Hitler developed the agricultural sector in Germany through introducing a number of reforms. For example, he recognized the successful farmers which increased their morale. He also extended credit facilities to the farmers which enabled them to finance their agricultural activities. This increased the production of agricultural goods which made the economy self-sufficient especially in terms of food production. This also made Hitler popular in Germany.

He used the foreign policy to consolidate power. In his foreign policy, Adolf Hitler was determined to reverse the Versailles Peace Treaty of 1919 which had humiliated Germany. Consequently, when he came to power he violated the treaty of Versailles by re-arming Germany. He went ahead and re-occupied the Rhine lands in 1936 which had been demilitarized, annexed Austria in 1938 and also conquered Czechoslovakia in March 1939. Hitler therefore tried to create the large and strong Empire in Europe which he had promised to the Germans which increased his popularity. However, this aggressive foreign policy sparked off World War II because when Hitler attempted to annex Poland in September 1939, Britain and France declared war on Germany so as to defend their ally Poland.

He exploited the policy of appeasement to restore the power of Germany in Europe which helped him to consolidate power in Germany. In the 1930s, the Prime Minister of Britain Neville Chamberlain and that of France Deladier had resorted to pleasing Adolf Hitler hoping that he would stop his acts of aggression. For example, when they left him to occupy Austria in 1938, he used this opportunity to occupy Czechoslovakia in March 1939. This made the Germans to consider Hitler as very strong and therefore they supported him.

Hitler also used alliances to strengthen his diplomatic relations with other European powers. For example, in 1935 he entered into an alliance with Benito Mussolini known as the Rome – Berlin

Axis. This alliance was later joined by Japan to form the Rome – Berlin – Tokyo Axis. These alliances however revived the alliance system in Europe which eventually led to the outbreak of World War II in 1939.

NOTE:

Hitler committed suicide in 1945, during the course of World II and he died with most of his staunch supporters.

Question

Assess the achievements of Adolf Hitler's regime in Germany between 1933 and 1945.

FASCISM IN ITALY AND THE RISE OF BENITO MUSSOLINI, 1922 - 1943

Fascism was an Italian dictatorial and anti - communist movement or political system developed by Benito Mussolini after 1919. It derived its name from the word "fasces" which referred to a bundle of sticks around an axe, the symbol of state power in the Ancient Roman Empire. In short, Fascism expresses an extreme dictatorial political system and therefore a fascist is a dictator.

In 1871, the unification of Italy was completed and the Italians established a liberal or constitutional government with VICTOR EMMANUEL II as the king up to his death in 1878. His government had a parliament and a constitution which allowed the different political groups to operate and they were represented in the parliament. However, liberalism was violated when Mussolini rose to power in Italy and replaced it with Fascism, a one man's dictatorship that turned Italy into a fascist state.

BENITO MUSSOLINI (1922-1943)

Mussolini was born in 1883 in Romagna - Italy to a Black Smith. He was a well educated man and graduate. In 1904, he joined a military school in Italy and in 1915 he fought in World War I. In 1921, he founded the National Fascist Party and he adopted the Black Shirt Uniform which was the uniform of the soldiers that had served in World War I.

Mussolini's Fascist party got seats in the parliament of Italy and while there they demanded for representation in government. The government refused and in October 1922, Mussolini and his army invaded Rome. King Victor Emmanuel III refused to resist Mussolini and his men and instead he allowed him to become the Prime Minister and requested him to form a government. As a Prime Minister of Italy from 1922 to 1943, Mussolini created a fascist state. He abolished all the opposition groups and the Italian parliament collapsed. Therefore, liberal Italy had fallen to Fascism.

FACTORS THAT LED TO THE RISE OF FASCISM AND BENITO MUSSOLINI IN ITALY

The fear of the spread of communism by the capitalists led to the rise of fascism in Italy. The businessmen, government officials and land owners had fear for communism which advocated for the state control of business and giving much power to the workers. Mussolini opposed communism and therefore they gave him financial support to create a strong government that

would reduce the political powers of the working class and put an end to the strikes of the industrial workers.

The cause for which fascism stood for led to its rise in Italy. Mussolini and his fellow fascists often spoke about the restoration of the glory or prestige and military strength of the Ancient Roman Empire. They argued that the empire had covered a greater part of Europe and Napoleon I had led to its collapse in 1797. The dream of reviving the Empire attracted the attention of the army officers and nationalists who provided support to Mussolini's fascism. Fascism also stood for the creation of a strong or totalitarian system of government, a one party state and self – sufficiency in terms of food and manufactured goods which made it popular among the Italians, hence explaining its rise.

The frustrated nationalism characterized by the failure to get colonies by Italy led to the rise of fascism and Mussolini. For example, Italy had failed to get Ethiopia and instead she was defeated at the Battle of Adowa of 1896. She also lost Tunisia to the French in 1882 as well as Egypt to Britain in 1882. Mussolini therefore used this to promise that he was to create a strong Italy without such humiliation.

The disappointment arising from the Versailles Peace Treaty of 1919 led to the rise of fascism in Italy. During World War I, Italy was promised territories by like Trentino, Tyrol and Trieste among others which were not given to her at the end of the war. Similarly, the Italians expected a lot of compensation in the Versailles Peace Treaty having lost 700,000 men during World War I. However, they were not given any share on the German and Austrian possessions or colonies and therefore they felt cheated by Versailles Peace Treaty. As a result, Mussolini and his supporters started demanding for such shares and therefore they got a lot of support especially from the war veterans.

The negative effects of World War I on Italy led to the rise of fascism in Italy. This war broke out in 1914 following the murder of an Austrian prince Arcduke Ferdinand and his wife Sofie. In 1915, Italy joined the war and fought on the side of the Triple Entente Powers up to 1918 when the Central Powers led by Germany were defeated. The war left many negative effects on Italy which created circumstances that led to the rise of Fascism and Benito Mussolini. For example, it created a very high level of unemployment with over 2.5 million ex-servicemen, inflation, declining standards of living and general poverty. The government had also borrowed heavily from USA which created an economic crisis in Italy as the government struggled to repay the loans. Those Italians who were affected thought that the liberal government was not caring for them and therefore they joined the fascist party of Mussolini which they thought would solve their problems.

The failure of the parliamentary system of government in Italy led to the rise of fascism. Although Italy had a liberal government with a parliament, the government lacked consistency in policy making due to the presence of many political parties that dominated the parliament. By 1921, there were nine political parties and they included the Socialists, Liberals, Nationalists, Communists, Catholic Popular Party and the Fascist Party among others. The system therefore prevented the existence of a strong government in Italy. As a result many Italians joined Mussolini's fascist party, thus leading to the rise of fascism in Italy by 1922.

The civil unrest in Italy led to the rise of fascism in Italy. Between 1919 and 1920, there was a wave of strikes, riots, looting of shops as well as the occupation of factories by the workers. This was caused by the widespread unemployment in the country. For example, there was Turin factory which was taken over and in Southern Italy, the Socialist League of workers captured land from the wealthy landlords and they also set up co-operatives. The failure by the Italian government to stop this unrest or internal violence and protect the property of the wealthy groups (church, landlords and industrialists) made them to support the fascists whom they hoped to put an end to this disorder.

The personality of Benito Mussolini led to the rise of fascism in Italy. By character, he was a good orator or speaker and organizer with a lot of authority. He criticized democracy as a weak form of government. As a journalist, he set up a news paper through which he spread the Fascist propaganda and this made him popular in Italy. He also formed the Fascist Party in 1921 and when this was done, he suppressed all the other political parties and therefore, Italy became a fascist state.

The role of the "Black Shirts" and their violence from 1920 onwards led to the rise of fascism in Italy. This was a private army set up by Mussolini and they killed their opponents with high a degree of brutality or harshness which threatened those who would have opposed fascism. Mussolini also used his "Black Shirts" army to intimidate and torture any suspected opponents to fascism. This therefore made the Fascist Party to remain with no opponents, hence explaining the rise of fascism in Italy.

Furthermore, the military style, discipline and organization of the Fascist Party attracted many soldiers. The way Mussolini's group smartly dressed in their Black Shirts carried weapons and fought battles with the Trade union members or workers made many former soldiers to join Mussolini and support Fascism.

The support from Pope Pius XI and the Roman Catholic Church led to the rise of fascism in Italy. Mussolini and his fellow fascists promised to repair the relationship between the Italian government and the Catholic Church which had been damaged since 1871 when the Italian government took over Rome. As a result, the Fascist Party received a lot of support from the Pope and the entire Roman Catholic Church in Italy which enabled it to come to power in 1922.

The failure of other opposition groups to gang up or unite against the fascists led to the rise of fascism in Italy. All the anti-fascist groups like the communists, socialists, nationalists, liberals and monarchists failed to unite against the Fascist Party under Benito Mussolini. As a result, there was lack of effective opposition against fascism which paved way for its rise in Italy.

The weakness of King Victor Emmanuel III also led to the rise of fascism in Italy. By 1922, the Italian liberal monarchy was under the leadership of King Victor Emmanuel III who had come to power in 1878 following the death of his father King Victor Emmanuel II. His government, however, failed to solve the prevailing economic problems in Italy like poverty and unemployment. He also failed to use the Italian army as recommended by the parliament to suppress the “Black Shirts” under Mussolini who had invaded Rome in 1922 and instead he invited Mussolini to form a new government. There was also wide spread corruption in the government of Victor Emmanuel III which made it unpopular, thus enabling the fascists under Mussolini to gain power in Italy by 1922.

The weakness of Prime Minister Orlando led to the rise of fascism in Italy. Besides King Victor Emmanuel III, Italy had a Prime Minister by the name of Orlando before Benito Mussolini came to power. However, Orlando was accused of being a weak and inefficient Prime Minister. This led to the appointment of Mussolini as the Prime Minister in 1922 and since he was a fascist, this led to the rise of fascism in Italy.

Hegel’s Philosophy led to the rise of fascism in Italy. Hegel was a Professor at Berlin University in Germany who believed in state power and authority. According to Hegel, the state was the supreme manifestation or representation of God on the earth. He therefore advocated for the establishment of a strong government. His philosophy or belief made Mussolini popular in Italy since he promised to set up a strong government in Italy that would replace the weak Italian monarchy under King Victor Emmanuel III.

The success of the “Fascist March” to Rome in 1922 led to the rise of fascism in Italy. In October 1922, Benito Mussolini organized his fascists to march to Rome and capture power in a coup. King Victor Emmanuel III refused to resist the march even though the Italian army was well equipped to disperse it. Instead, the king invited Mussolini and told him to form a government. This marked the rise of fascism in Italy. Benito Mussolini governed Italy as a Fascist or dictator up to 1943 when he was overthrown during the course of World War II.

Questions:

🏠 Why did liberal Italy collapse easily to fascism?

🏠 Account for the collapse of liberalism in Italy.

📖 Account for Mussolini's rise and consolidation to power.

ACHIEVEMENTS OF BENITO MUSSOLINI'S REGIME

Mussolini reconciled the Catholic Church with the state. In 1929, he signed the Lateran treaty with Pope Pius XI. This treaty solved the conflict between the Catholic Church and Italian government. This treaty was important because since 1871 the Popes were in conflict with the Italian government for having taken over Rome which was their capital. By this treaty, the Pope accepted Rome to serve as the capital of Italy and in return the Popes were given Vatican to be their independent state.

Similarly, when Mussolini came to power, he initially denounced Catholicism. He also abolished the Roman Catholic Youth organizations and the influence of the Catholic Church in the state affairs. However, by the Lateran treaty of 1929 Mussolini changed his attitude and recognized the Catholicism as the state religion. He even went ahead and compensated the Catholic Church for all the losses incurred since 1871. This made Mussolini popular among the Catholics in Italy.

He carried out military reforms which created a very large army for Italy. The army was equipped with modern fighting tools. It was also trained to a very high level of efficiency or ability. This army helped to ensure internal order as well as promoting the Italian glory abroad.

Mussolini encouraged industrialization in Italy. Between 1931 and 1935, his government funded industrial establishment through giving credit facilities to the industrialists. The iron and steel

industry, ship building and the telephone systems were the main beneficiaries. This helped to create employment opportunities for the Italians, hence increasing Mussolini's popularity.

Mussolini increased the production of hydro-electric power in Italy. During his regime, all the rivers that had much water were exploited for this purpose. This helped to increase the level of industrialization as well as to provide power to the homes which also made Mussolini popular in Italy.

Mussolini contributed to the development of infrastructures and public works in Italy. For example, towns were built, leisure activities were encouraged through the construction of sports grounds, halls and libraries. Mussolini therefore modernized Italy which increased his popularity among the Italians.

Mussolini promoted law and order (peace) in Italy. He dealt with the opponents of his regime like the socialists and communists with a high degree of brutality through exiling them to Lampedusa Island in the Mediterranean Sea or killing them. For example, he ordered for the murder of the leader of the Socialists who was known as Matteotti in 1924. This scared all those who would have opposed the Fascist regime, thus promoting internal law and order in Italy.

His government contributed to the development of agriculture in Italy. Mussolini introduced modern methods of agriculture especially the use of farm machinery. Swamps were also reclaimed which increased food production especially wheat. This was aimed at achieving self – sufficiency in terms of food production in Italy.

Mussolini developed the transport and communication facilities in Italy. For example, he constructed new railway lines, roads, bridges and canals which helped to promote trade and commerce in Italy. This also increased his popularity among the Italians.

Mussolini carried out educational reforms which strengthened the education system in Italy. He introduced the Fascist curriculum which emphasized the fascist principles. He also constructed new schools in Italy which boosted the education sector. This also made him popular among the Italian fascists.

His government encouraged the establishment Corporate trade unions. Before Mussolini came to power, the unions of the workers were very strong and they used to give problems to the employers especially through strikes. However, Mussolini abolished the trade unions and replaced them with corporations where the workers, employers and the government were equally represented. These corporate trade unions settled the workers' wages and therefore created a disciplined working class in Italy.

Mussolini restored and promoted the Italian glory abroad. For example, in 1935, Mussolini sent the Italian troops to Ethiopia and they captured Addis Ababa, the Ethiopian capital. He therefore annexed Ethiopia to the Italian Empire. Mussolini went further and occupied Albania in 1939 and therefore he extended the Italian influence there. He also participated in the Spanish Civil War that broke out in 1936 which assisted General Franco to come to power in 1939 and this made Italy popular in Europe..

Similarly, Mussolini entered into alliances with other European countries which promoted the Italian foreign glory and national pride. For example, in October 1936, he entered into the Rome

– Berlin Axis with Germany under Adolf Hitler. This alliance was later joined by Japan to form the Rome – Berlin – Tokyo Axis in 1938. These alliances strengthened the position of Italy in Europe.

Mussolini promoted European diplomacy. For example, he was vital in the negotiation and later signing of the Locarno Treaties of 1925 between Germany and the victorious powers of Britain and France. In these treaties which were arranged in Locarno – Switzerland and later signed in London, Britain and France agreed to normalize their relations with the defeated Germany which promoted international peace and security and the credit goes to Mussolini who had mediated in these negotiation.