
National Socialist era - Germany

The National Socialists who did not have a clear parliamentary majority (on March 5, 1933 obtaining 43.9% of the federal election vote to have 288 seats) could not govern by themselves still needing to be in a coalition which in this case was arranged with The German National People's Party (52 seats, 8% of federal vote. As it was the Social Democratic Party (SDP) a major opponent to the Nazis had 120 seats via 18.3% of the federal vote with the Communist Party of Germany (KDP) with 81 seats of 8.3% of the federal vote. There were fourteen parties of a Reichstag with 647 seats with 324 seats needed to arrive at a majority. There was a high turnout of nearly 89% of the electorate for this 1933 election).

Although the Nazi party was the largest political entity in the Reichstag it is telling that it could still not achieve a majority-in-its-own right when it had unleashed - with SA brownshirts and SS troopers given free reign to terrorize - a campaign of intimidation against its left opponents which included the Social Democrats, trade unionists and communists with the latter to be especially singled out in the thousands to be arrested and imprisoned; this was all threatening, anti-democratic behaviour which was possible for the Nazis to carry out due to the already heightened sense of national crisis accentuated by the Reichstag Fire which rather 'fortuitously' occurred only a few days before the March 1933 election. An election that only came into play due to Hitler instigating it when he was appointed Chancellor by Hindenburg on January 30 and once appointed wanted to 'urgently' go on and 'save the nation' from the political 'nihilism' of the Left hoping to have the Nationalist Socialists govern Germany in its own majority right without having to tediously be in coalition with any other political parties even if they too were from the Right.

Hitler had become Chancellor on the advice of a recently former Chancellor Von Papen to Hindenburg who would become Vice-Chancellor all on the misguided belief that an underestimated Hitler could be controlled and real power could still lie as well as eventually 'properly' return to the old traditional conservative political class.

The Communists also believed that Hitler's time as leader would also be short-lived due to what seemed at the time to be an ongoing unstable state of economic and political flux and thus the KDP would take advantage of the political vacuum that would occur after Hitler's fall. None of this of course happened as Hitler outwitted all of his opponents and established total power.

Thus the National Socialists who did not have a majority would manufacture their 'legal' rise to supreme power by first being able to obtain Hindenburg's blessing to appoint Adolf Hitler as Chancellor even though the Nationalist Socialists did not have a parliamentary majority in their own right; and then accommodating the National Socialist call to bring in the Reichstag Fire Decree immediately after the burning of the Reichstag which was ultimately blamed on a Dutch Communist who would be beheaded for his 'crime' (four others would be acquitted) but it is rightly speculated that it was such an opportune event for the National Socialists they were certainly the true arsonists; with it even alleged that a typically foolish Herman Goering once privately boasting during the war that he was the actual culprit.

(Fear...Arthur Miller's The Crucible in which usually sane townspeople can be seen rushing around in panic...all distressed that they will be possessed by the devil...to kill an innocent

defenceless woman...any witch hunt is justified when the hunters are so propagandistically imbued with the frightening thought of their own possible demise that would be brought on by their 'malicious' 'prey'...thus immediate action must 'necessarily' be taken and for any irrational, murderous act to be seen as wholly moral so as to achieve a greater good. Yes, to 'purify' the world of 'evil' by committing an evil act).

Thus the National Socialists would annihilate democracy in the name of 'defending democracy'.

Following the Reichstag Fire Decree that would do away with civil liberties from press freedom; the right to publicly assemble and to even bring on a loss of privacy rights in regards to both telephone and postal correspondence all of which was able to unquestionably happen as the supposed threat of a Communist plot to overthrow parliamentary democracy had by way of the National Socialists taken a traumatised hold in the national imagination.

The Enabling Act would follow which would allow the National Socialists to lay down legislation without the need of parliament with Hitler ruling by decree thus 'validating' what was now a fully fledged dictatorship.

The Enabling Act was 'legalised' by obtaining a two-thirds majority in parliament which only occurred by detaining both Communist members of parliament as well as some Social Democrat parliamentary representatives into detention camps which were now being filled with rounded up Communists deemed as a 'national security threat'.

Apart from a remaining parliamentary Social Democrat bloc voting against the Enabling Act all other parties which were mainly conservative in their political character allied with the National Socialists thus providing the much needed majority.

The Supreme Court did not query the legality of a law which was passed with members of parliament detained and with SA and SS troopers present to intimidate the parliament. After all, what was of higher importance was that democracy was 'under threat' and now democracy was 'saved'. It was all that mattered for without resorting to revolution the Fuhrer had 'correctly' followed constitutional processes to obtain ultimate power thus 'legitimatising' his rule.

Two web links (amongst so many that one may care to view) looking at the Reichstag Fire and its political ramifications:

Who Was Really Responsible For The Reichstag Fire? – Mythbusting Berlin. Matt Robinson. (August. 2020).

<https://www.berlinexperiences.com/who-was-really-responsible-for-the-reichstag-fire-mythbusting-berlin/>

The True Story of the Reichstag Fire and the Nazi Rise to Power. Lorraine Boissoneault. Smithsonian Magazine. (2017).

<https://www.smithsonianmag.com/history/true-story-reichstag-fire-and-nazis-rise-power-180962240/>