

The nazi seizure of power



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

There have been many arguments as to how the phenomenon of the Nazi seizure of power occurred in January of 1933. Two historians, Richard Bessel and William Sheridan Allen, propose two different ways in which the Nazis came to power. Richard Bessel takes a look at how the Nazis came to power on a grand, country wide scale whereas William Allen talks about the phenomenon at a smaller and grass roots level. Bessel argues that the Nazis were accepted for four main reasons; war, racism, violence, and the wanting of order. In his book, *The Nazi Seizure of Power*, Allen argues that the seizure of power in the small town of Thalburg was because of the town's structure, the fact that the Nazis were able to appeal to the middle and lower class and the fact the Social Democratic Party could not counter the rapid growth of the Nazis.

The politics of the Weimar republic had a shadow casted over it by the First World War, and this helped to create a climate favorable to Nazism. Because of the war Hitler was able to present himself as a front soldier and represent the generation of the trenches. The people of Germany saw him as a person who came from being on the road to nowhere to a life of an activist on the right of German politics. Hitler's leading lieutenants; Hermann Göring, Rudolf Heß, Ernst Röhm all had military experience and this "Cabinet of Front Soldiers" appealed to the 8 million voters who were war veterans. The hostility to the Versailles Treaty, especially to the war guilt paragraph 231, formed an important aspect in the way in which the Nazis attracted support and came to power. According to Bessel, the memory of the war and its legacy also served to legitimate the capture of power. On 21 March 1933, Hitler presented his government to a Reich President von Hindenburg in

military uniform in a ceremony opening the new Reichstag session in Potsdam. This display transformed Hitler into a “ Statesman” in the eyes of Conservative Germans who were still unenthusiastic towards the Nazis. It also gave a broad popular basis for the politics of revenge. Political leaders as well as normal citizens wanted a return to Germany’s original stability and military strength. People wanted to strike back at those who imposed the suffering of a lost war and an unfair peace treaty.

Bessel stated that Nazism cannot be explained without racism, but racism doesn’t play major role in how Hitler achieved power. In other words, when the voters went to vote, they had other concerns on their mind. The Nazi hatred of the Jews was not a hidden concept and there were patterns to the attacks on them. Storm trooper attacks on Jews and Jewish interests would occur in wake of greater attacks on the left side of politics. There was wide spread toleration of the attacks from both NSDAP and the public. On 10 March, 1933 Göring, who was now in charge of the Prussian Police, gave a speech in the city of Essen. He declared he was “ unwilling to accept notion that the police are a protection squad for Jewish shops.” Göring’s speech was used by authorities to justify the police failing to uphold the law. With control of the authorities, Nazis now had no fear of retaliation from the judicial system. For Example, in August 1932, there were several Nazi political assassination attempts and bombings in eastern Prussia. The SA members were found guilty, but Hitler stood by them stating their freedom was “ a question of honour.” In short, the SA were found guilty of attempted murder and the future leader of Germany was standing by them say there was nothing wrong with what they did. Bessel also stated that ordinary Germans

had a willingness to profit off of the Nazi violence toward the Jews. The German businessmen and artisans had the desire to eliminate Jewish competition so they themselves could do better, but they had no desire to get their hands dirty and had no issues reaping the benefits of Nazi violence

In his article, Bessel points out key positioned men wanted way out of political crisis of the final Weimar years which would guarantee an authoritarian government and a conservative order. Previous Reich chancellors had tried to provide stable authoritarian rule without bringing a social democrat into government in a time where there was a growth of anti-democratic parties. When Hitler Conservative elites miscalculated Hitler and thought they could harness him and his mass support to a conservative authoritarian order.

Like the rise of Nazism nationwide, the rise of Nazism in the small town of Thalburg was from the Nazis military appeal. Thalburg was a small town with a strong nationalistic background and many militaristic organizations.

Appeal to middle and lower class

Fear of depression

Meeting addresses to specific people

SPD

Counter rallies

Middle class hatred

order

Richard Bessel argued that antisemitism was a basic principle of the Nazi party in their rise to power; however Allen's study of Thalburg shows otherwise. The Jewish population in Thalburg was small and very much integrated. Thus, the people of Thalburg had no interest in antisemitism and there was little propaganda for supporting antisemitism. Allen states that the citizens of Thalburg were attracted to antisemitism because they were attracted to the Nazis.

Although William Allen's argument on the rise of Nazism is a considerable one, Richard Bessel's argument is more persuasive. Although Bessel looks at the grand scheme of things, he looks at the behind the scenes at the political appeal of Adolf Hitler to the elites as well how the Nazis appealed to the "ordinary" German. William Allen's argument is persuasive in the sense that he shows how a small town with a strong nationalistic background could become a Nazified one. A problem with Allen's argument is of how much credit for the rise of Nazism is because of Hitler himself. According to Allen, it was the local measures that were important in the establishment the totalitarian regime as national government. Attributing everything to the reaction of a middle class to the fear of the depression and hatred for the SPD doesn't really show what Hitler actually represented to the nation.

When looking at the sources