

# Nazis In Germany

Spirit of '66

Brian Fischhoff

1966

“Once the Germans were war-like and mean but that couldn’t happen again.  
We taught them a lesson in 1918.  
And they haven’t bothered us since then.”  
—Tom Lehrer

Playing an oldie but goodie in an age of more subtle tunes of political violence, more than a million of the good citizens of the Federal Republic of Germany have cast their lots in with the National Democratic Party (NDP). Getting 6.1 and 7.4 percent of the votes in state elections in Bavaria and Hesse, the NDP has stirred up some feelings of uneasiness and some fancy political science footwork as to which generation they belong to.

However, whether they are the remnants of the Third Reich or the seeds of the Fourth may be but an academic question. The ante bellum days of fascism seem never to have been too far from the Prussian spirit. As French, American and British carpetbaggers loosen their grip, the unreconstructed of the Master Race are merely becoming more vocal.

If there is a surprise inherent in the situation, it is that the world should be caught off guard. Election of a party openly neo-Nazi (so described the West German Interior Ministry) is not as much a new development as an effort to let the inattentive spectator better tell the players without a scorecard. A cursory glance at the line-up reveals that Gerhardt Shroeder—Foreign Minister, Bucher—Housing Minister, Hans-Christoff Zeivos—Transportation Minister, Hermann Hechrell—Agriculture Minister, Hans Kreigel—Minister of Refugees, among others, were all National Socialist Party (Nazi) activists.

Mr. Kurt Georg Keisinger himself, the Chancellor-elect, is an interesting study in the double-talk obscuring the almost unbroken continuity from the Germany of Hitler to that of today. Though a member of the party from 1933, he claims readmission to humanity on the grounds that his heart wasn’t in it and that he didn’t even pay dues after 1934. Though he worked in Von Ribbentropp’s Ministry of Information until arrested by the Allies, he again claims innocence through the commission of a petty anti-Nazi crime. He was weakly reprimanded in November 1944 for interfering with anti-Jewish propaganda.

His heresy, however, was not so great that he was imprisoned, nor beaten or conscripted as a stripling strong man of 36 at a time when the blind and parapalegic were being drafted, nor demoted nor even fined. Nor was his act serious enough to stop the ovens which had gone on day and night shifts at Auschwitz the month before. The lack of Jews to persecute did a more effective job of inhibiting anti-Semitic propaganda than did Mr. Keisinger.

Beating the lower echelon bushes a bit reveals almost as rich a bounty in ex-Nazis. Though there are acts of penance and reform, the whole national apparatus is in the same hands. Generals, government servants, and teachers with rich Nazi pasts have returned home and changed uniforms to shape the Germany of the future. Eighty-five percent of the judges in Bavaria served the Nazis also. Mass murderers received sentences suitable to smalltime second-story men, getting great sympathy from judges and juries who know just how they feel.

Nor has it been a time for quiet democratic contemplation for those in power with obscured pasts. Unable to stomach conventionalities as a representative Parliament, leaders of the ruling Christian Democratic Party have been attempting since 1956 to introduce a new system of "Emergency Laws" which would supersede all existing statutes in time of crisis. Primary opposition had come from the Social Democrats. Last week they joined the Grand Coalition; it is likely their opposition will cease.

Proclaimable at the discretion of the Bundestag, the W. German parliament, the laws would grant the ruling party power to conscript citizens, forbid strikes, regulate all jobs, establish work camps, put citizens on trial without due process of law, arrest people solely on the basis of their political activity in the past, end freedom of assembly and movement and pass laws without public knowledge.

Not waiting for legal acceptance of the bill, a chosen 33, together with government ministers, have already had a practice meeting of the Emergency Parliament. Professor Werner Weber, successor to Carl Schmidt, legal ideologist for the Nazi Regime, at the University of Gottingen, has spoken as a distinguished visitor to the Bundestag about his ideas for judicial reform.

According to one of the small groups constituted to prevent passage of such laws, "These laws bring us back to Germany of the Third Reich. They prove that the rulers of Germany have neither learned nor forgotten anything. We are likely to wake up one morning and discover that we are living under a legal dictatorship." (Al Hamishman 12-3-66)

There is danger in Germany, but it may lie more with quiet Nazis who are our friends and allies than the foaming ones in the 'opposition NPD. The US would do well to stop feeding the Moloch and join the Soviet Union in consistently opposing any attempt to reunify Germany lest there be a third encore of Germany on the move, followed by a final curtain, for the passion play from Bavaria.

# fifth Estate

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