Nazi Siezure Of Power Essay, Research Paper

The Nazi Seizure of Power

Frustration with a current administration, or concern with ones present state in society provides a strong foothold for new ideas to develop, grow and be heard. The Nazi Seizure of Power perfectly illustrates the prevailing reasons for Nazi dominance in a complex community of 4,700 inhabitants. It also serves as a relatively sized scale to explain the how Hitler and the NSDAP were able to establish their presence, and impose their dictatorship throughout all of Germany and beyond. One of history’s most tragic displays of human nature and interaction was the way in which the Nazi’s came to power and how they maintained it for as long as they did. We continually contemplate the psychology of Nazi Anti-Semitism and the murderous intent that arose from its growth. Yet, few question not why the Holocaust took place, but how Hitler and his radical political supporters had the capacity to infiltrate cities and impose a steadfast grip on power. It is hard to believe that ideologies structured around such obtrusive evil would have the ability to establish a position in politics or government, let alone maintain

dominance. In times of uncertainty and uneasiness, however, people thrive on entertaining the ideals of voices that scream change.

Firstly, Northeim’s Nazis created their own image by their own initiative, vigor and propaganda. The main concentration in the nazi electoral surge and seizure was on the local level; to accompany this the critical figures were the local Nazi leaders. There were constant parades and meetings, which gave the impression of irresistible enthusiasm and approval. There was the vigor in the economic area which more than anything else seem to justify the dictatorship. No one was killed and very few people were sent to concentration camps from Northeim during the early years of the third Reich. On the one occasion when Ernst Girmann seemed determined to turn, the storm troopers loose on Carl Quefert and his little tobacco store. It was not members of the Northeim SA who were to interrupt Quefurt’s business; truckloads of Storm Troopers form another town was brought in for the occasion. Both of these men were neighbors, it was hard for even the most involved Nazi of Northeim, to be so ruthless as to go against someone who had grown up on the same block as him. In July 1932, before the election the NSDP resorted to mass propaganda, where model texts were given out to target each individual group of people. Including war widows, pensioners, war wounded, Communists, women, young workers, union members, and wives of the bourgeoisie. Nazi’s went door to door handing out leaflets and numerous Gau speakers speaking at packed halls accompanied this. When Northeim’s people went to the polls on Sunday, July 31, the Nazi’s received 62 percent of the vote.

Another important reason behind the particular experience in Northeim and the most important factor in the victory of Nazism in Northeim was the active division among class lines. There were political divisions between the left and right; there were class lines between worker and bourgeois. There were occupational lines between the stable and the insecure; there were areas of segregation between the relative newcomers and old families, and there were religious and social divisions. There was some cohesion before the Nazis came onto the political spectrum, it existed in the middle class or within the working class and did not extend to the entire town of Northeim. The victory of Nazism is due mainly on the part of Northeim’s middle class ability to suppress the lower class and especially its political representatives, the SPD a.k.a. the Specialist Democratic Party. What social cohesion there was in the town existed in the club life and this was destroyed in the early months of Nazi rule. With their social organizations gone and with terror and reality, Northeimers were largely isolated from one another. This was true with the middle class but even truer of the workers, since by the destruction of the SPD and the unions the whole complex of social ties created were effaced. This enabled the Nazis to make movements resulting in mass in whatever direction they wished. Northeim contained more government employees than most other towns, which made the process much easier. Because of their dependence on the government the civil servants were in an exposed position and had no choice but to work with the Nazis if they valued their livelihood. Especially Northeim’s teachers, who formed important social and cultural ideas among the town, found themselves drawn into support of the NSDAP almost immediately. As more people hopped on the bandwagon in the spring of 1933, the possibility of resisting Hitler became less realistic.

Thirdly, the depression exposed Northeim’s Socialist. The use of economic pressure at the sugar factory and at the railroad deprived the SPD of most of its prestige and power. The main effect of the depression was that it radicalized the town, not because the town was hurt badly by the depression, the only group that was affected was the workers who lost their jobs. “The workers remained steadfast in support of the status quo while the middle class, only marginally hurt by economic constriction, turned to revolution.” (Pg. 24) Northeimer’s were willing to tolerate approaches that would have left them indignant or indifferent under other circumstances. Many signs reassured Northeimers that Hitler’s economic methods were in motion and were effective.

A combination of the terror system and the atomization of society combined to prevent any such resistance to Nazi power after 1933. Firstly the terror system, which made it by midsummer 1933, to even express distaste in the new system was inviting persecution. The general feeling in Northeim was that the Gestapo was everywhere, and was efficient by reason of rumors and fears. The Nazi’s had control of the city government and they had absolute power, which enabled them to reward friends and punishes enemies, not to mention they had control of the local police. Nazi police had reason to justify their repressive methods. Newspapers reported whatever they told police and what people believed was more important than the truth. The existence of the Moringen Concentration Camp instilled fear in Northeims’ people. A good amount of people claimed of the existence of a “list”, “It was made up of four groups: A, B, C, and D. The A people would be shot; the B people would be put in concentration camps, etc”. (Pg. 189) It became clear that the Nazi’s had long memories and anyone that crossed them would be hounded everywhere he or she went. Another significant factor was that there was never any opposition to Ernst Girmann. For instance, Benno Smidt was beaten up one day for refusing to give the Hitler salute. The Gestapo was especially anxious to get their hands on anyone who did not burn Reichsbanner flags and membership lists. Most SPD members who could be forced out of their jobs were given the choice of either no work at all or work in a stone quarry. All in all, the terror system efficiently ended all formal party organizations in Northeim whose ideology opposed to that of Hitler.

The rigid class structure that was evident before Nazi rule was destroyed by the Gleichschaltung. By the summer of 1933 the atomization of society is under way, the Nazi’s had either broken up, altered, brought under control most of the clubs and societies of Northeim. The complex and diversified social organization of the town had been nearly uprooted. Northeimers were brought together into one kind of unorganized mass that a dictator wants. Everything was coordinated including the Town’s library was coordinated. By mid-may over five hundred books were burned, one quarter of the collection. The Nazis wanted to facilitate dictatorial control for nazi reorganization of social units. The main objective of Nazi restructuring was to provide a consistent attempt to subordinate and join together on all communal activities that had the same goals and interest. One could understand why Hitler would do this, people could be easily observed, and if social ties were broken down there would be less opportunity of spreading discontent. The NSDP promoted religion and began a campaign to revitalize the church. They tried to get Lutherans to join the “German Christian Movement”, whose sole interest was to regenerate and unify Protestants. When it came time to vote for The Church Elders, the only nominations were members of the German Movement. Eventually the teachers were brought together, with the creation of the Northeim Teachers Association. Hitler Youth students who were given preferential treatment in academic matters, including presumably higher grades for courses taken earlier. School authorities and teachers abided by Nazi orders for how schools were to be run for fear of losing their job.

In this account of the Nazi rise to power Allen focuses on a small German town and reduces Adolf Hitler to a background figure. Nevertheless he presents a powerful picture of how a radical party like the NSDAP could come to rule Germany in the 1930s. There were three underlying causes for this, which all played a huge role in resulting in the Third Reich; including the worsening depression, large scale propaganda, and the active division of class lines. Hitler was evenly as good at keeping his party in power by implementing terror that was unheard of before the 1930s and by destroying a rigid class structure. In some ways, the greatest Nazi crime was to encourage and justify moral numbness, even with those who did not agree with the Nazi s. (Pg. 302)