

## Chapter 3

### Evil's Storm Descends

(NOTE: I cross-reference this chapter extensively in Chapter 29, which I have already uploaded at [http://barwinski.net/documents/pastor\\_and\\_the\\_matriarch/chapter\\_29\\_pastor\\_and\\_matriarch\\_of\\_the\\_german\\_underground.pdf](http://barwinski.net/documents/pastor_and_the_matriarch/chapter_29_pastor_and_matriarch_of_the_german_underground.pdf))

On Wednesday February 1 1933, just two days after Hitler had taken power in a then minority government,<sup>1</sup> Dietrich gave a radio address at the Potsdamerstrasse radio station. It was entitled “The Younger Generation’s Altered Concept of Leadership” and it dealt with the fundamental problems of leadership by a Führer, explaining how such a leader inevitably becomes an idol and a “mis-leader” or seducer (Verführer). However, just as he stated the concept of the Verführer, the speech was cut off.<sup>2</sup>

It would seem that Hitler’s henchmen ordered the termination of the broadcast. That may have been the case, but there is nothing that conclusively points to this. For one thing, it’s unclear whether or not the Nazis, after barely a couple of days in power as a minority government, had the authority or ability to control the airwaves, as they most certainly would in the not too distant future. Given the strict schedules radio stations always have to adhere to, an alternative and much more benign possibility has been suggested — that Dietrich simply ran out of time.<sup>3</sup>

One important aspect of Dietrich’s address was that it was not specifically about Hitler, but about the popular concept of the so-called Führer Principle (Leader Principle); this was at the heart of Dietrich’s objection to Hitler, and had, curiously enough, been around for decades. It had its genesis in the popular German Youth Movement of the early twentieth century; at the time of Dietrich’s radio address, the Führer and Adolf Hitler were not yet the same thing. Moreover, Dietrich’s address was not a response to Hitler’s recent election, as it had already been planned for some time. In the speech, there was no mention of politics or current events. Rather it was a philosophy lecture, but as Metaxas stated, “it spoke more clearly about the political situation than a thousand political speeches.”<sup>4</sup> “It was everything a ranting Hitler speech was not,”<sup>5</sup> being most measured, sedate and precise.

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Late that same month of February 1933, at 9 pm on Monday 27<sup>th</sup>,<sup>6</sup> the burning of Berlin’s Reichstag, whether a Nazi contrivance or otherwise, precipitated a chain of events of untold political “manna from heaven” (or perhaps hell!) for the still precarious minority regime. Today, there seems to be a fragile consensus amongst historians in general that a recently arrived Dutch communist, Marinus Van der Lubbe, born in 1909, was the sole perpetrator of the arson. However, there is enough evidence to at least view this conclusion with scepticism. William L. Shirer, in his book *Rise And Fall of the Third Reich*, quotes the testimony at the Nuremberg trials of General Franz Halder, Chief of the German General Staff during the early part of WWII:

At a luncheon on the birthday of the Fuehrer in [April 20] 1942 the conversation turned to the topic of the Reichstag building and its artistic value. I heard with my own ears when Göring interrupted the conversation and shouted: ‘The only one who really knows about the Reichstag is I, because I set it on fire!’ With that he slapped his thigh with the flat of his hand.”<sup>7</sup>

At the time of the fire, Hitler was dining at Joseph Goebbels’ home when his host received the call that the Reichstag was on fire. According to Metaxas, quoting Shirer’s book, Goebbels was not at first convinced, as the caller was Ernst “Putzi” Hanfstaengl. While he was Harvard educated, and his money and connections had greatly helped Hitler’s rise to power, he was also known as a bit of a clown, and thus Goebbels’ first impression was that Hanfstaengl was pulling his leg. However, when he and Hitler arrived, they found that for once, Hanfstaengl was deadly serious, and were greeted by the first at the scene, the rotund Hermann Göring.<sup>8</sup>

Puffing and panting, the most corpulent of the Nazi elite professed that this was the beginning of the communist revolution, and that no mercy must be shown in shooting and/or stringing up every communist official that could be found. [I cross reference this in Chapter 29.] If Göring was in on the possible Nazi plot, now of course was not the time for honesty! The removal of their communist rivals from the dying Weimar political landscape was resoundingly called for. Could it be that Goebbels and Hitler were not in on the plot, but Göring was? In any event, at the scene, the shirtless Dutchman, who had supposedly used his shirt for tinder, was arrested on the spot.

Suddenly, the Bonhoeffer family was thrust into the centre of the national crisis.<sup>9</sup> Firstly, Dietrich's father Karl, Berlin's premier psychiatrist, was summoned to assess Van der Lubbe, while Dietrich's brother-in-law, Hans von Dohnányi, with whom Dietrich and brother Klaus became close friends during their gymnasium days in Grunewald,<sup>10</sup> was appointed as an official observer at the trial. It did not commence until seven months after the fire, in Leipzig on September 21 1933, and on October 10 it moved to Berlin to observe the Reichstag premises. There, court proceedings were carried out in the Reichstag's budget committee room. However, for the last month, from November 23 to the reading of the verdict on December 23 by presiding Judge Büniger, the court returned to Leipzig.<sup>11</sup>

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When the verdict was handed down on December 23 by Judge Büniger, Marinus van der Lubbe, the most forlorn and pathetic figure imaginable, was sentenced to death. The Dutch Ambassador in Berlin appealed for clemency, and countless petitions from all over the world poured into Germany, all to no avail.<sup>12</sup> On January 9 1934, Van der Lubbe was informed by the Public Prosecutor of the rejection of his appeal, and that he was to be beheaded the following morning. With commendable composure, the condemned man replied; "Thank you for telling me; I shall see you tomorrow." He wrote no letters to family or friends, and was to die a forlorn and lonely death, a tragic mirror image of his painful life.<sup>13</sup>

His fellow defendants, however, were far more fortunate, as there was no evidence to link them to the fire. Hence, much to the embarrassment of Göring and the regime in general, they were acquitted and exiled to the Soviet Union as heroes, after eleven or so months of Nazi rule.<sup>14</sup> As in the lead-up to and during the 1936 Berlin Olympics, with the eyes of the world again upon them, the regime moderated their anti-Jewish measures. This case was heard in a court where the rule of law in concert with hard evidence still applied, regardless of the intensity of raving, bellicose Nazi propaganda. Tragically, however, this was one of the last cases to be conducted independent of the Nazi party agenda until post-war.<sup>15</sup>

Enraged by the acquittal of the other defendants, Hitler and Göring took action just a few months later in a cabinet meeting on March 23, 1934.<sup>16</sup> Its participants included Doctor Wilhelm Frick, the minister of the interior, and ironically, Ernst Röhm, head of the Stormabteilung (SA) (aka Brown Shirts or Stormtroopers), who would be murdered in the Night of the Long Knives just a matter of months later, along with his SA cronies. For now, however, this meeting's focus was on initiating measures, in cases of "treason" at least, to replace the "irritating and annoying" Reichgericht (National Court), which conducted the Reichstag Fire trial, with a court much more amenable to the National Socialist agenda. Just one month later, on April 24, 1934, the Volksgerichtshof (People's Court) was officially founded.<sup>17</sup>

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This was only going to prove a minor annoyance to Hitler. Röhm's aptly coloured brown shirt pit bulls worked in concert with the police to continue their agenda of terror and arrests. Their dubious legitimacy was authorised by the rump Reichstag. In servile compliance, it passed the suppressive "Malicious Practices" and "Enabling" acts on March 21 and 23, just sixteen and eighteen days following the last "free" election. The former furnished the judicial means to prosecute anyone who, "with malicious afterthought" put forward reports that might impair the welfare of the Reich; the latter, officially the "Law to Remove the Crisis of the People and the State," was the constitutional means by which the Reichstag of Weimar,<sup>18</sup> like a snake swallowing its tail, passed the law that obliterated its existence.<sup>19</sup> [I cross reference this in Chapter 29.]

While the acquittal of all the defendants bar Van der Lubbe in the fire trial was somewhat of an embarrassment for Hitler and Göring, and perhaps a minor propaganda coup for the Soviet regime, overwhelmingly, the fire, whether contrived or otherwise by the regime, became the National Socialists' political and propaganda weapon, paving their pathway to unbridled absolute power. [And in Chapter 29, when discussing Washington DC January 6, 2021, I cross reference this.] Moreover, for anyone outspoken like Dietrich, who refused to declare his loyalty to Hitler's Reich, the passing of the Malicious Practices Act meant that in the wake of the last vestiges of Weimar, he was now walking a dangerously thin line.<sup>20</sup> However, not one to shy away from the challenge of a just cause, Dietrich's theological battle with the Third Reich would now commence in earnest.

- 1 The make-up of Hitler's first cabinet in late January 1933, is given on page 3 of the New York newspaper *The Jewish Daily Bulletin* dated Tuesday the 31st of January 1933. It can be downloaded from the website of the Jewish Telegraphic Agency at [http://pdfs.jta.org/1933/1933-01-31\\_2464.pdf?\\_ga=2.168216929.1504613013.1533967459-202169450.1533967459](http://pdfs.jta.org/1933/1933-01-31_2464.pdf?_ga=2.168216929.1504613013.1533967459-202169450.1533967459). Only four out of eleven were Nazis, namely Hitler himself, Hermann Göring, Franz Seldte and Wilhelm Frick. See also [http://www.iiipublishing.com/blog/2018/04/hitler\\_cabinet.html](http://www.iiipublishing.com/blog/2018/04/hitler_cabinet.html), the blog of American writer and activist, William P. Meyers. Both links accessed on Saturday July 25, 2020.
- 2 Position 330.0 of Metaxas. See also position 331.5 of Schlingensiepen and source note #32 on page 280 of *Berlin: 1932-1933: Dietrich Bonhoeffer Works, Volume 12* of Dietrich Bonhoeffer Works Series, by Dietrich Bonhoeffer, edited by Larry L. Rasmussen, translated by Isabel Best, David Warren Simons Higgins, published by Fortress Press, 2009, ISBN 1451406657, 9781451406658. The most latter source states exactly when the speech was cut-off. See also position 331.7 of Schlingensiepen.
- 3 Position 332.3 of Metaxas.
- 4 Position 334.3 of Metaxas.
- 5 Position 334.5 of Metaxas.
- 6 Error: Reference source not found Error: Reference source not found Page 85 of *Burning the Reichstag: An Investigation Into the Third Reich's Enduring Mystery* by Benjamin Carter Hett, published by OUP USA, 2014, ISBN 0199322325, 9780199322329.
- 7 Error: Reference source not found Error: Reference source not found Page 193 of *Rise And Fall Of The Third Reich: A History of Nazi Germany* by William L. Shirer, published by Simon and Schuster, 1990, ISBN 0671728687, 9780671728687. Hitler was born on April 20, 1889 in Braunau am Inn, Austria, near the border with the German state of Bavaria. See the article on Hitler at <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Adolf-Hitler>. Accessed on Saturday August 8, 2020.
- 8 Error: Reference source not found Position 349.8 of Metaxas and pages 191 to 192 William L. Shirer.
- 9 Position 350.8 to 353.4 of Metaxas and pages 264-265 of Bethge.
- 10 Hans von Dohnányi was born in Vienna on the January 1 1902 as the son of the Hungarian pianist and conductor Ernő von Dohnányi and the pianist Elisabeth von Dohnányi (née Kunwald). Upon the separation of his parents in 1913, he grew up in Berlin, where he attended the liberal Grunewald Gymnasium, from which blossomed, his friendship with Dietrich and Klaus Bonhoeffer. See the timeline in German on the website of the *German Historical Museum (Deutsches Historisches Museum)* at <https://www.dhm.de/lemo/biografie/hans-dohnanyi>. Accessed on Saturday July 25, 2020.
- 11 Page 142 of Benjamin Carter Hett and the online article from the *Monthly Review* website, an independent American socialist magazine, by Michael E. Tigar and John Mage at <http://monthlyreview.org/2009/03/01/the-reichstag-fire-trial-1933-2008-the-production-of-law-and-history/>. Accessed on Saturday July 25, 2020.
- 12 Pages 108-109 of *The Reichstag Fire* by Fritz Tobias, with an Introduction by A. J. P. Taylor, first American edition 1964, English translation 1963 by Martin Secker & Warburg Limited, first published in Germany under the title *Der Reichstagsbrand*, by G. Grottesche Verlagsbuchhandlung.
- 13 Page 169 of William L. Shirer.
- 14 Position 355.8 of Metaxas.
- 15 Page 45 of *In the Name of the Volk: Political Justice in Hitler's Germany* by H. W. Koch, published by I.B.Tauris, 1997, ISBN 1860641741, 9781860641749, documents the Nazi cabinet meeting of the March 23 1934 and the subsequent official founding of the *Volksgerichtshof* (People's Court) one month later.
- 16 Ibid.
- 17 Pages 45 to 46 of *In the Name of the Volk: Political Justice in Hitler's Germany*.
- 18 Error: Reference source not found Error: Reference source not found Error: Reference source not found Page 11 of the book *Berlin: 1932-1933: Dietrich Bonhoeffer Works, Volume 12* by Dietrich Bonhoeffer, edited by Larry L. Rasmussen, translated by Isabel Best, David Warren Simons Higgins, published by Fortress Press, 2009, ISBN 1451406657, 9781451406658.
- 19 Error: Reference source not found Error: Reference source not found Error: Reference source not found Position 357.0 of Metaxas.
- 20 Error: Reference source not found Error: Reference source not found Pages 266 to 267 of Bethge.

## Chapter 4 - The Aryan Paragraph