



Written by [Kurt Hyde](#) on June 22, 2020

Published in the June 22, 2020 issue of [the New American](#) magazine. Vol. 36, No. 12

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## Third Reich Redux

**The coronavirus emergency set the stage for many decrees by officials — many unconstitutional — telling citizens what to do. Such abuses of power can easily become permanent.**

The *Dallas Observer* attempted to shame people into obeying government stay-at-home mandates in an article entitled “The Coronavirus Challenge: Don’t Be Selfish or Stupid. Stay Home.” The article asserted about the non-followers of the mandates:



Refusing to stay put while bragging that you’re unafraid is not heroic. It’s villainous. You’re volunteering to host a deadly virus that might kill someone else. That’s like offering Ted Bundy shelter for the night because you don’t fit his victim profile, when you have a house full of sorority girls.

Major media, government agencies such as the Centers for Disease Control and the National Institutes of Health, and politicians have pressured Americans to follow onerous lockdown orders put out by governors, such as ones from Michigan that both “prohibit in-person work that is not necessary to sustain or protect life” yet allow liquor stores to remain open. Michigan’s Governor Gretchen Whitmer issued edicts seemingly as whims struck her: allowing hardware stores to open yet not allowing large department stores to sell hardware supplies, allowing kayaking while not allowing boating in motorized boats, and encouraging food delivery but not allowing furniture delivery.

For the most part, those on the ideological left have strongly supported the mandates — in words, at least, if not always in deeds — while those on the right supported precautions so that people could make up their own minds about how to respond to the disease and railed against mandatory lockdowns wherein government chose workplace winners and losers.

The Right often has labeled the government mandates totalitarian, while the Left dubbed the Right callous and selfish.

But history suggests that the Right has been right. Not only have the coronavirus lockdowns been shown to not work any better at preventing deaths than not locking down, the decrees issued by government in America today are frighteningly similar to the emergency decrees of the early 1930s in Germany. Those decrees led the German people, in many cases acting out of misguided patriotism coupled with naïve faith in the honesty of their political leaders, into blindly obeying as their country abandoned the rule of law (laws passed by their legislature) and sank into a dictatorship by decrees. Once Germany began rule by decree, instead of representative government, it went down the slippery slope to dictatorship in only about three years.

*Photo: AP Images*

*This article appears in the June 22, 2020, issue of The New American.*

**Germany’s Slide to Dictatorship**



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The German people's path to dictatorship began in the aftermath of WWI, having suffered economically from the unjust reparations of the Versailles Treaty that ended the war, the hyperinflation of the early 1920s, and the worldwide hard times brought about by the Great Depression. During this period, Germans suffered even further from an unstable political environment.

Then a subtle seed of dictatorship was sown in Germany on March 30, 1930 when Heinrich Brüning was named chancellor, a position he held for a little over two years. Chancellor Brüning's time in office was a constitutional disaster for Germany. Brüning took advantage of Article 48 of the German constitution, which granted temporary emergency powers, of course to be used only if public safety was seriously threatened. Sound familiar? The Reichstag (the German legislature) had to be informed immediately of all measures taken under emergency decrees, and the Reichstag was supposed to be the ultimate authority over them. Brüning issued no fewer than five emergency decrees in 1930, and at least 40 such decrees in 1931. The decrees covered many areas: A decree outlawed possession of firearms at political rallies, and on January 15, 1932, Brüning suspended the capitalist system.

Under Brüning the German people accepted emergency decrees as a legitimate means of government. Why not? The German people did not have a long history of constitutional government; each decree was accompanied by a statement justifying it; and the decrees were supposed to be temporary — supposedly only in force as long as deemed necessary. Soon, the German people became accustomed to rule by decree, rather than by rule of law.

The next two chancellors after Brüning, Franz von Papen and Kurt von Schleicher, were in office for very short terms, the latter lasting in office for only 56 days. Papen ruled by decree, even decreeing himself the head of Prussia, the largest state of the German Reich, and Kurt von Schleicher worked behind the scenes to institute a military dictatorship under President Paul von Hindenburg.

While von Schleicher was a politically ambitious man, he did at least one act as chancellor that could be described as benevolent. The *Evening Star*, a Washington, D.C., publication of that era, wrote in its December 20, 1932 issue:

Chancellor Kurt von Schleicher today made public a political decree abolishing emergency courts, easing press restrictions and tending generally to give the German people an opportunity to show they can behave without police vigilance.

Von Schleicher was murdered by the Nazis on June 30, 1934 during the infamous Night of the Long Knives — two days of extrajudicial executions of people Adolf Hitler and his SS considered rivals or threats. Von Schleicher was a political schemer and was frequently allied with Ernst Röhm, whom Hitler viewed as a rival. Political power is a dangerous game.

Adolf Hitler, the new chancellor when von Schleicher left office in January of 1933, used the seeds of dictatorship brought about by "government by decree" that had been planted in Germany by Chancellor Brüning and others to bear bitter fruits.

Once in power, Adolf Hitler and his National Socialist German Workers' Party (Nazi) were very skillful in the use of crises as steppingstones for implementing more governmental authority over the people. Another way of saying this is that the Nazis never let a crisis go to waste. Among the "crises" the Nazis capitalized on were the following:

- The Reichstag fire on February 27, 1933 — The Reichstag, the building where the German legislature



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met, was set ablaze by “someone,” and the government acted. William F. Jasper wrote in The New American of September 16, 1996:

Although it has never been definitively settled whether the fire was set by a communist *saboteur* or by a Nazi *agent provocateur*, it is beyond debate that the Nazis capitalized on the event with a vengeance. Insisting that the Reichstag fire prefigured a communist onslaught against the German state, Hitler persuaded President Hindenburg to sign an emergency decree “for the Protection of the People and the State,” suspending constitutional liberties and allowing the state to exercise extraordinary powers in the name of “public safety.”

The Reichstag Fire Decree was issued the very next day, on February 28, 1933. The timing raises additional suspicions that the Reichstag fire was set by the Nazis. It’s hard to believe the Reichstag Fire Decree was conceived and composed in less than a day.

The Enabling Act of March 23, 1933 came on the heels of the Fire Decree, ostensibly also put in place to safeguard the people. This bill gave the chancellor’s cabinet supposedly temporary legislative power — essentially making it an oligarchy with the powers of the Reichstag. Because the bill was essentially a constitutional amendment, it needed a two-thirds majority vote, as well as a two-thirds quorum in attendance to pass. With plenty of political maneuvering, plus a little intimidation from Nazi Brownshirts who were present at the vote, the Enabling Act passed with the necessary two-thirds vote, with the only opposition being from the SDP (Social Democrats). The Communist Party (KPD) was not allowed in the Reichstag, and they didn’t vote.

The shenanigans did not end there. The Enabling Act was supposed to be temporary, scheduled to expire on April 1, 1937, but was extended in 1937 and extended again in 1941. The evidence is clear that the Nazis never intended for this “temporary” act to expire.

- Treason — Hitler and his SS felt threatened by the Brownshirts — a paramilitary wing of the Nazi Party that Hitler had used for a decade to protect Nazi rallies and intimidate and attack opponents — and other political rivals. So beginning on June 30, 1934, Hitler called for an assassination blitzkrieg in which his SS and other followers wiped out Hitler’s old friend Ernst Roehm and other top leadership of the Brownshirts.

But a plausible pretext for the purge was needed. No problem: A coup “plot” by Roehm was fabricated that served the purpose of providing justification for legalized government terror. Hitler passed a one-paragraph law that read: “The measures taken on June 30 and July 1 and 2 to strike down the treasonous attacks are justifiable acts of self-defense by the state.”

Many more equally fraudulent “justifiable acts of self-defense” would follow.

- Terrorism — Again, from the The New American of September 16, 1996:

On November 7, 1938, a Jewish refugee from Germany, Herschel Grynszpan, shot and killed a German diplomat in Paris. This was exactly the incident the Nazi regime needed to fully unleash its attack on the Jews. On the night of November 9, 1938, Nazi-orchestrated mobs “spontaneously” rioted in retaliation, destroying Jewish shops and synagogues, beating and killing Jewish residents. It is remembered as the “Night of Shattered Glass,” or *Kristallnacht*, and thereafter all opponents of the Nazis would be demonized as Jewish sympathizers and related “criminal elements.” Firearms ownership laws were already onerous, but the Nazis immediately disarmed all Jewish



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people in Germany, issuing the following order ... on November 10, 1938 by SS Reichsführer Heinrich Himmler: "Persons who, according to the Nürnberg Law, are regarded as Jews, are forbidden to possess any weapon. Violators will be condemned to a concentration camp and imprisoned for a period of up to 20 years." Nothing like taking away the ability of innocent victims to defend themselves right when they need it most.

But Adolf Hitler also picked on the Christian churches. And though there was some opposition from the clergy, such as Popes Pius XI and Pius XII on the Catholic side and a few Lutheran ministers, such as Martin Niemöller, Dietrich Bonhoeffer, and Karl Barth, many German pastors chose compliance with the Nazis.

Hitler implemented his strategy in segments. A quote attributed to Martin Niemöller sums up the process well: "First they came for the communists, and I did not speak out — because I wasn't a communist. Then they came for the trade unionists, and I did not speak out — because I wasn't a trade unionist. Then they came for the Jews, and I did not speak out — because I wasn't a Jew. Then they came for me — and there was no one left to speak for me."

And so step by step the imposition of the nightmare of dictatorship happened in Nazi Germany, mainly through so-called temporary decrees. The decrees were usually extended or replaced by additional temporary decrees that were as bad or worse.

The only way they could be said to be temporary is because the entire Nazi empire, emergency decrees and all, collapsed on May 8, 1945, also known as V-E Day, the day Nazi Germany surrendered and WWII ended in Europe.

### **Manipulating Elections**

But there was a second way that the Nazis gained and maintained control over the German people: rigging elections. Sometimes they beguiled the people, and sometimes they committed massive electoral fraud.

The Nazis held no fewer than seven major elections during their short reign, and by seizing power over the electoral process, they frequently won their elections with 90 to 99 percent of the vote.

The Nazis, like many other dictatorial regimes, actually enjoyed holding elections — as long as they were in a position to rig them. As the Nazis took control over the German people they also silently moved behind the scenes to take control over the electoral process. One of their electoral control mechanisms was the power of the ruler to set the dates of elections and to change them on a whim, rather than have election dates set by a legislature. Another tool of the dictator was to assume the power to alter the rules and procedures for elections — again, at the ruler's whim and not by the legislature. Sound familiar?

A prime example of Hitler's skill in manipulating election dates and election procedures can be seen in how he rigged the infamous Anschluss Election of April 10, 1938, to annex Austria. First, Hitler was able to coerce Austrian Chancellor Kurt Schuschnigg, while on a visit to Berchtesgaden in Germany, to agree to terms of cooperation with Germany, which Schuschnigg knew were going to mean Hitler would rule Austria.

But Schuschnigg had been observing Hitler's use of referendum elections to generate the appearance of consent by the governed, and he decided to try to outfox Hitler at his own game. Once safely back in





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Austria, Schuschnigg suddenly scheduled a surprise election, a referendum on Austrian independence. His announcement, made on March 9, 1938, was for the election to be held only four days later, on March 13. He even had the ballot designed to make it easier to vote “yes” for independence than to vote “no.” Given that he issued his own decree with such short notice, Schuschnigg hoped he would have had the plebiscite completed before Hitler could react and that that would remove Hitler’s chances of using a pretense that the people of Austria wanted to be ruled by Germany. The *New York Times* of March 10, 1938 estimated Schuschnigg’s “yes” votes would probably be between 60 and 80 percent.

However, Hitler surprised the world by reacting very quickly. The German army invaded Austria on March 12, with few, if any, shots fired. Some Austrians actually were in favor of unification with Germany. Those not in favor of Hitler knew Austrian military resistance to the German Army was futile. So the Austrian military, under orders not to resist, let the Germans in.

Hitler immediately announced that the March 13 referendum election would be rescheduled. Within a few days, Hitler started making changes to the electoral procedures. Instead of an election about independence, he renamed it the Anschluss (annexation) Election. (It’s a competitive advantage to make the favored action a “yes” vote.) Hitler then issued the Anschluss Decree, which set the date for the Anschluss election as Sunday, April 10. Hitler, after having scathingly criticized Schuschnigg for his electoral shenanigans, pontificated that the Anschluss Election would be free and use the secret ballot. He added that further details of how the election would be run would be in forthcoming decrees.

Of course, the Anschluss Election was a typical Hitler-manipulated election. The Nazi propaganda machine was turned on. The ballot itself was designed to make it obvious that *ja* (German for yes) was the desired vote, as it was above the larger circle centered under the question, while *nein* (German for no) was above a smaller circle off to the side. The wording of the ballot also favored the affirmative vote. The two-part question on the ballot (translated into English) was:

Do you agree with the reunification of Austria with the German Reich on 13 March, 1938 and do you vote for the ticket of our leader Adolf Hitler?

During the voting, Nazi election officials violated the secret ballot by cutting away sides of the voter privacy booths, allowing the election officials to observe the ballots as they were being marked. In the end, Adolf Hitler won with over 99 percent of the vote.

### **The Here and Now**

Both of the aforementioned tactics — rule by decree and rigged elections — are being attempted in America today. Governors and other leaders, even unelected bureaucrats, are issuing decrees, and the American people are blindly obeying them, not questioning their constitutionality.

And using the coronavirus as an excuse, elections are being scheduled and rescheduled with little or no notice, to certain parties’ advantage. And the method of the elections is being tampered with — moving to mail-in balloting and vote harvesting — to allow dubious influence over our elections. And amazingly, just as the Jews were targeted in response to “crises,” scaremongering is used to justify interfering with freedom of religion, whether it be Christians trying to celebrate Easter or Jewish people mourning the passing of Rabbi Chaim Mertz in New York.

The German people protested the decrees, especially the damage the decrees did to the German economy. This is happening in America today, as people are protesting governmental overreactions to



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the coronavirus that are instituting shutdowns.

And while the German people undoubtedly felt the relief when Chancellor von Schleicher issued a decree in December of 1932 that eased the restrictions on freedom of the press and the police controls, and many Americans have felt relieved as President Donald Trump has pushed governors to end lockdowns, the solution to the problem of overbearing government is not to be found in searching for a benevolent ruler.

Only an uprising by the mass of the people would have worked, and will work, to restore individual rights and freedoms. Germans should have worked toward restoring constitutional government and removed Article 48 from the Weimar Constitution — the article that allowed emergency decrees. In America today an organized movement to restore constitutional government and keep government from being overbearing is needed or we, too, could experience a constitutional roller coaster that ends in despotism.

If state constitutions allow emergency decrees today, the state constitutions must be changed. If the state constitutions did not authorize the emergency decrees of 2020, then we must get to work to impress upon people how critical it is to enforce the constitutions of the states as well as the U.S. Constitution.

We need more than just a movement to reopen America for the sake of the economy. Restoring the economy is a good thing, but we also need a full restoration of constitutional government. Perhaps the worst thing that could happen now would be for the country to reopen for business, but do so “safely,” where safely is a code word meaning constitutionally protected rights are just privileges subject to decrees by governors or other officials, some elected and some unelected. In Germany it took only about three years to degenerate from the chancellorship of Heinrich Brüning to the chancellorship of Adolf Hitler. There is absolutely no reason the same thing could not happen here — and that’s just what “progressives” and globalists are counting on.

*Photo: AP Images*



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