

Reichstag

Germany's parliament from 1871 to 1945. According to the constitution of the democratic Weimar Republic (which lasted from 1919 to 1933), the *Reichstag* was supposed to be elected by all citizens every four years. However, in reality, the German president had the right to dissolve the parliament of his own accord. In addition, the Weimar law allowed proportional representation, meaning that even parties with a small number of supporters were represented in parliament. During the late 1920s more and more small parties were taking part in the parliament, and as a result, it became increasingly difficult to form a government with a majority of votes. In fact, by 1930 the president mostly governed by himself, issuing emergency decrees as he saw fit.

In January 1933 Adolf Hitler and the Nazis rose to national power without a majority of votes or seats. Then, in order to gain better control, the Nazis burnt down the *Reichstag* building in late February and pinned the arson on their Communist opponents.

On March 23, 1933 the *Reichstag* surrendered its authority to the Nazis. Until 1942 the *Reichstag* continued to exist as a one-party parliament, but with no lawmaking powers. In 1999 the *Reichstag* building again became the seat of the German government.