Source A

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| **Bush's 9/11 Reichstag Fire**  |
| **by Harvey Wasserman** |
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| When Hitler was rising to power in 1930s Germany, somebody did him the favor of burning the Reichstag, the German Parliament. It's widely believed the Nazis torched it themselves. Hitler's cynical minions turned that fire into a horrific wave of terror. They blamed "the communists" and the Jews, the trade unionists and the homosexuals. With the support of a terrified populace, they suspended civil rights and civil liberties, fattened their war machine and rode the fascist tide into a full-blown dictatorship. The rest, as they say, is history. The neverending White House-sponsored orgy of 9/11 rhetoric, recrimination and retaliation has become a treacherous parallel. Few Americans believe the Bush Administration itself brought down the World Trade Center last year. But the conviction is widespread throughout Europe and the Muslim world, and for good reason. This unelected regime---Hitler also came to power with a minority of votes---has used the terrible tragedies of September 11 in much the way the Nazis jumped on the Reichstag fire. Bush has failed to capture or try 9/11's alleged perpetrators. But he's used the tragedy to push an extreme rightist agenda aimed at crushing civil liberties, silencing all opposition, fattening a war machine, and arrogating the right to unilaterally attack other countries without tangible provocation. With this has come an assault on the natural environment, women's rights, gay rights, organized labor, a wide range of international treaties, and the need of the public to know about and prosecute corporate crime and fraudulent stock dealings, which seem to involve at least half the Bush cabinet, including its two ranking members.  |

Source B

***Reichstag fire of 9-11?***

**by Greg Greene**

Those who refuse to learn from history are condemned to repeat it.

- Montezuma

On February 27, 1933, a mentally deranged Dutch Communist, Marinus van der Lubbe, lit a few small fires in
the German parliament building, the Reichstag, in Berlin--not enough to set the building alight, but sufficient
to get him hanged as the sole perpetrator afterward. The happenings prior to that fateful evening, and the
events following it, carry some lessons for those wanting to understand September 11, 2001, and the
subsequent developments.

van der Lubbe, a petty criminal and arsonist, hated the Nazis, and had bragged about intending to set the
Reichstag on fire while having a beer in a pub. The Nazi SA, with ears everywhere, found out, and,
unbeknownst to van der Lubbe, an SA detachment entered the building through a disused central heating
tunnel. While the Dutchman was busy lighting insignificant fires, using his shirt as tinder, the [SA planted
gasoline and incendiaries,](http://www.wsws.org/articles/2001/jul2001/reic-j05.shtml) and within minutes, the Reichstag was burning out of control. Why did the Nazis
do this?

At the time, Hitler had a problem. Based on the success of the Nazi party in the previous election, Hitler
had become Reichskanzler, or Prime Minister, but he lacked a majority in both the government and the
parliament. Having no intention of playing second fiddle to his rivals, a coalition of moderate parties, he
needed a decisive victory in the March 5 election. He also was uncomfortable with the democratic process,
and wanted to proceed directly to Nazi supremacy and dictatorship.

Hitler's solution was to eliminate the Communist party and its 100 deputies, which would give his Nazis a
majority in the remaining parliament. By ensuring that van der Lubbe succeeded in destroying the
Reichstag, he could pronounce the fire a Communist conspiracy. By the next morning he had secured the
signature of the aging President, von Hindenburg, on legislation that changed Germany from a democracy
to a tyranny. The one hundred Communist deputies were arrested, civil rights were abrogated, and the
country embraced Hitler as its Leader.

In mid 2001, the Republican government in the United States was having a problem. It was seen as merely
presiding over a recession, having accomplished nothing of significance, and it faced an uphill battle in
getting the largest peacetime defense budget increase approved in Congress. The corporate sponsors of
the Bush administration were, no doubt, getting impatient: the stocks of the defense industry were still
losing their value, and, lacking a credible enemy, there were serious reservations in Congress against
spending more on defense.

During the weeks prior to September 11, 2001, Muslim terrorists made it known that they were going to hit
some notable landmarks in America, and hit them hard. These boasts surfaced on the Internet, much the
same as van der Lubbe's bragging in the Berlin beer hall. Much as in Germany in the '30s, help was
forthcoming, and for the same reasons.

On the morning of September 11, four large passenger jets with full fuel tanks went off course over the US
Northeast, and ceased communicating with Air Traffic Control. Sounds of a struggle were overheard from
the cockpit of one plane. Passengers made cellular phone calls from two of the flights, reporting that the
planes had been hijacked. The Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) followed standard procedures and
informed the US Air Force, which has fighter jets ready to intercept troubled or suspicious civilian aircraft on
short notice. No higher level approval is needed; fighter jets typically begin escorting the offending plane,
and, if necessary, forcing it to land, within ten minutes of being alerted by the FAA.

But that day, the [Air Force received orders from the highest levels](http://www.rense.com/general17/werestanddown.htm) of the Bush government not to intercept
the four hijacked passenger planes. Finally, after the first one had hit the World Trade Center in New York,
a couple of fighter jets were scrambled from Boston, ensuring that they couldn't reach New York before the
second impact. A poorly rehearsed press conference by vice-president Dick Cheney provided the public with
the required misleading statements on the intercept, or rather, the lack of it. Interestingly, in a TV
interview on December 4, 2001, Laura Bush let it slip that already back in July, the White House, knowing
that the country would be in mourning at the end of the year, had begun redesigning the 2001 Christmas
cards on a more somber note than usual.

So far, the parallels with what happened in Germany in February 1933 are evident. They become clearer
still when we look at the results of the attacks. Just as in Germany in 1933, the text of the new US
legislation abrogating constitutionally guaranteed civil rights [was ready](http://www.alternet.org/story.html?StoryID=12032) at the time of the WTC and
Pentagon attacks. Unprecedentedly, the Federal laws needed were enacted within less than a month after
September 11, without significant opposition or debate. Capitol Hill legislators barely bothered to read the
bills they approved. As a result, as if by flipping a switch, anyone suspected of terrorism in America is now
presumed guilty until proven innocent. The authorities are free to accuse anybody of being or supporting a
terrorist. Conveniently, terrorism has not been defined; however, it already has become clear that it
includes exercising one's First Amendment rights.