



Volume 7. Nazi Germany, 1933-1945

Hitler's Comments at a Dinner with the Chiefs of the Army and the Navy (February 3, 1933)

On February 1, 1933, two days after being sworn in as Reich Chancellor, Hitler proclaimed that the program of the new government would eliminate the inner fragmentation of the German *Volk* and allow Germany to reemerge as an economically stronger, peaceful world power. On February 3, 1933, Hitler was invited to a dinner with military commanders at the home of Commander-in-Chief General Kurt von Hammerstein-Equord (1878-1943). There, the new chancellor said a great deal more about his true domestic and international political agenda, the thrust of which was the establishment of a dictatorship for the purpose of waging war.

Members of the military leadership had initially welcomed Hitler's appointment as Reich Chancellor, since they shared his anti-democratic, anti-Bolshevist views and hoped that rearmament and military expansion would help strengthen Germany. Hammerstein, however, was a decisive opponent of National Socialism and therefore tendered his resignation at the end of 1933. He was in touch with members of the resistance movement within the military, and two of his sons, Kunrat and Ludwig, were involved in the July 20, 1944, plot to assassinate Hitler.

General Lieutenant Liebmann, an infantry commander who was present at the dinner, took the following notes during Hitler's two-and-a-half hour speech.

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The sole aim of general policy: *the regaining of political power*. The whole State administration must be geared to this end (all departments!).

1. *Domestic policy*: Complete reversal of the present domestic political situation in Germany. Refusal to tolerate any attitude contrary to this aim (pacifism!). Those who will not be converted must be broken. Extermination of Marxism root and branch. Adjustment of youth and of the whole people to the idea that only a struggle can save us and that everything else must be subordinated to this idea. (Realized in the millions of the Nazi movement. It will grow.) Training of youth and strengthening of the will to fight with all means. Death penalty for high treason. Tightest authoritarian State leadership. Removal of the cancer of Democracy!

2. *Foreign policy*: Battle against Versailles. Equality of rights in Geneva; but useless if people do not have the will to fight. Concern for allies.

3. *Economics*: The farmer must be saved! Settlement policy! Further increase of exports useless. The capacity of the world is limited and production is forced up everywhere. The only

possibility of re-employing part of the army of unemployed lies in settlement. But time is needed and radical improvement not to be expected since living space too small for German people.

4. *Building up of the armed forces*: Most important prerequisite for achieving the goal of regaining political power. National Service must be reintroduced. But beforehand the State leadership must ensure that the men subject to military service are not, even before their entry, poisoned by pacifism, Marxism, Bolshevism or do not fall victim to this poison after their service.

How should political power be used when it has been gained? That is impossible to say yet. Perhaps fighting for new export possibilities, perhaps—and probably better—the conquest of new living space in the east and its ruthless Germanization. Certain that only through political power and struggle can the present economic circumstances be changed. The only things that can happen now—settlement—stopgap measures.

Armed forces most important and most Socialist institution of the State. They must stay unpolitical and impartial. The internal struggle not their affair but that of the Nazi organizations. As opposed to Italy no fusion of Army and SA intended—most dangerous time is during the reconstruction of the Army. It will show whether or not France has *statesmen*: if so, she will not leave us time but will attack us (presumably with eastern satellites).

Source of English translation: Jeremy Noakes and Geoffrey Pridham, eds., *Nazism, 1919-1945, Vol. 3: Foreign Policy, War and Racial Extermination*. Exeter: Exeter University Press, 2001, pp. 20-21.

Source of original German text: Handwritten notes by General Lieutenant Liebmann. Munich, Archive of the Institute for Contemporary History, No. 167/51, fol. 39; reprinted in Thilo Vogelsang, Dokumentation: „Neue Dokumente zur Geschichte der Reichswehr 1930-1933“, *Vierteljahreshefte für Zeitgeschichte* 2 (1954), Heft 4, pp. 434-35.