



Rudolf Hess

Four Speeches

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The Oath to Adolf Hitler

Speech by Rudolf Hess on 25 February 1934

On 25 February 1934, about a million Nazi Party officials gathered at points around Germany to swear an oath to Adolf Hitler. This is an excerpt from the speech that Rudolf Hess gave on the occasion, which was broadcast to the nation.

The source: "Der Eid auf Adolf Hitler," Rudolf Hess, *Reden* (Munich: Zentralverlag der NSDAP, 1938), pp. 10-14.

German men, German women, German boys, German girls, over a million of you are gathered in many places in all of Germany!

On this the anniversary of the proclamation of the party's program, you will together swear an oath of loyalty and obedience to Adolf Hitler. You will display to the world what has long been obvious to you, and what you have expressed in past years, often unconsciously.

You are swearing your oath on a holiday that Germany celebrates for the first time: Heroes' Memorial Day. We lower our flags in remembrance of those who lived as heroes, and who died as heroes. We lower the flags before the giants of our past, before those who fought for Germany, before the millions who fought in the World War, before those who died preparing the way for the new Reich. I name Horst Wessel because he has become a symbol for us, and remember through him all those "shot by the Red Front and Reaction."

Woe to the people that fails to honor its heroes! It will cease producing them, cease knowing them. Heroes spring from the essence of their people. A people without heroes is a people without leaders, for only a heroic leader is a true leader able to withstand the challenge of difficult times. The rise or fall of a people can be determined by the presence or absence of a leader.

We do not want to forget the mothers, women, and children who gave their dearest, often their provider, and bear their fate with quiet heroism.

The battle-ready manly heroes and the quiet sacrifices of mothers and women are holy examples of loyalty for us Germans. The flags that we now raise once more are the symbols of this loyalty, which for Nordic mankind is closely bound to heroism!

Loyalty not only in deed, but in character is demanded of you. Loyalty of character often demands no less heroic virtue than does loyalty in deed. Loyalty in character is unbreakable loyalty, a loyalty that knows no ifs or buts, that knows no weakening, Loyalty in character means absolute obedience that does not question the results of the order nor its reasons, but rather obeys for the sake of obedience itself. Such obedience is an expression of heroic character when following the order leads to personal disadvantage or seems even to contradict one's personal convictions. Adolf Hitler's strength as a leader is that he almost always works through the power of his persuasion; rarely does he command. He must know, however, that when he commands, or allows a command to be given, that it will be obeyed absolutely, down to the last block warden.

The power and effectiveness of a good organization is even greater when discipline prevails. The greater its obedience even in small things, the more clearly it marches to the right or the left depending on the command of the leader, the more exactly the command to march in short or long steps is followed, the more surely the Führer can take the steps necessary to realize the National Socialist program.

All we National Socialists work for the realization of this program, just as we once worked to gain control of the state. We fought for the souls of the farmers, for the souls of the workers, for the souls of the middle class, for the souls of men, for the souls of women, for the souls of the old, for the souls of the young — we the members of the main organization of the NSDAP as well as the men of the Labor Service, the leaders of the affiliated organizations of the party such as the National Socialist women. With the same will young men and women strive toward the same goal, to become those who will replace us as the masters of Germany's fate.

Hitler Youths, you have given the same absolute loyalty to the Führer that Germany's young volunteers gave twenty years ago at Langemarck, which demanded their heroic deaths for our people and the Reich. You have made the youth of Langemarck your model. You have the good fortune to live in a Reich that the best warriors of 1914 could only dream of — a Reich that for all eternity will remain united if you do your duty. For you, doing your duty means: Obey the Führer's orders without question! You will be the best living memorial to the dead comrades of the first years of the war when you maintain discipline in your ranks.

The more a Hitler Youth leader demand discipline from his boys, the more he must display it himself. He must demand discipline from them above all when his boys long for glorious freedom or wild behavior. It should be easier for the youth of today to accept discipline and subordination — combined with an appreciation of the accomplishments of the older generation — since the older generation is the generation of the World War. I know how you were persecuted, maligned, hated and mocked because of your faith in the Führer. I know how many of your comrades sacrificed their young lives! I know it well!

But I also know that all the dangers and sorrows that a Hitler Youth suffered, even in the most Communist neighborhood in the years before the seizure of power, are not comparable to the dangers and sorrows that a front soldier experienced in a single day! Never forget that when your leader, who endured the battleground for us, demands self-discipline of you.

I say to the political leaders what I said to your comrades in *Gau Thuringia* as they were sworn in last year: Be true to Hitler's spirit! Ask in all that you do: What would the Führer do. If you act accordingly, you will not go wrong!

Being true to Hitler's spirit means knowing that a leader has not only rights, but above all duties. Being true to Hitler's spirit means always being a model. "To be a leader is to be an example," just as Hitler and his work are an example for you. Being true to Hitler's spirit means being modest and unassuming. Being true to Hitler's spirit means remaining a thorough National Socialist in good times and bad. Being a thorough National Socialist means to think ever and only on the whole National Socialist German people. It means that no matter what, always to be a servant of the total National Socialism of Adolf Hitler, to be a fully conscious, heartfelt follower of the Führer above all else.

Be ever a servant of the whole, within the movement as well, and never forget that only the whole movement, not a part of it, can guarantee victory and the conquest of the future.

Be ever aware that, wherever you are, you owe thanks to the Führer, for his leadership enabled every victory. Wherever you are, be it high or low, work for his movement, and therefore for Germany. Remember what Adolf Hitler says: it makes no difference if one is a street cleaner or a professor, as long as he works for the whole and does his duty.

The reward for your labors is the feeling of having done one's duty for the movement, for Adolf Hitler, for Germany.

All of you, whether political leader, SA, SS or Hitler Youth share a common pride: Being a member of Adolf Hitler's NSDAP!

You are all the scouts and the defenders of the National Socialist army of the movement. You are each indispensable and equal. Each of you is as unique in history as National Socialism itself. You are typically National Socialist.

SA, SS, and political leaders have a common tradition, embodied in the "Old Guard." It includes all who fought, sacrificed, suffered, risked or gave their lives for Germany's resurrection under National Socialism. It has the honor to have bled and sacrificed for our people's future. You have earned the thanks of all who enjoy the blessings of life in a new Reich. It is a Reich led by men who share a desire for national freedom, socialist community and peace in dignity and honor.

Political leaders! Leaders of the Labor Service, the forces of labor! Women's leaders, HJ leaders! Leaders of the BDM! You will now take an oath to Adolf Hitler!

Your oath is not a mere formality; you do not swear this oath to someone unknown to you. You do not swear in hope, but with certainty. Fate has made it easy for you to take this oath without condition or reservation. Never in history has a people taken an oath to a leader with such absolute confidence as the German people have in Adolf Hitler. You have the enormous joy of taking an oath to a man who is the embodiment of a leader. You take an oath to the fighter who demonstrated his leadership over a decade, who always acts correctly and who always chose the right way, even when at times the larger part of his movement failed to understand why.

You take an oath to a man whom you know follows the laws of providence, which he obeys independently of the influence of earthly powers, who leads the German people rightly, and who will guide Germany's fate. Through your oath you bind yourselves to a man who — that is our faith — was sent to us by higher powers. Do not seek Adolf Hitler with your mind. You will find him through the strength of your hearts!

Adolf Hitler is Germany and Germany is Adolf Hitler. He who takes an oath to Hitler takes an oath to Germany!

Swear to great Germany, to whose sons and daughters throughout the world I send our best wishes.

[Throughout Germany people take the oath.]

This has been the greatest common taking of an oath in history!

We greet the Führer!

To the Front Fighters of the World

Speech by Rudolf Hess in July 1934

Rudolf Hess explains in this July 1934 speech that the Nazi leadership have themselves experienced the horrors of trench warfare during World War I and that they favor peace. The speech was delivered to the *Gau* Party Rally in East Prussia, but was intended for an international audience as well.

The source: "An die Frontkämpfer der Welt," in Rudolf Hess, *Reden* (Munich: Zentralverlag der NSDAP., 1938), pp. 39-48.

In a few weeks, it will be the twentieth anniversary of the beginning of the great heroic struggle of the German soldiers. It was here in East Prussia that the great soldier Hindenburg rescued your land — the same soldier who today as Reich president is the guarantee of peace.

East Prussia suffered more than any other German province during the war. East Prussia experienced the brutal reality of war. For a long time, some areas bore the impact of the Russian attack. Many of you, my East Prussian party comrades, can still remember the misery of the refugees streaming from the homeland they left behind to escape the Cossacks.

Because you have known war on your own soil, I chose here in East Prussia to speak words I had long wanted to speak to Germany and above to all the world.

Our nation has the good fortune today to be led largely by front soldiers, by front soldiers who carried the virtues of the front to the leadership of the state.

The rebuilding of the Reich was guided by the spirit of the front. It was the spirit of the front that created National Socialism.

In the face of looming death at the front, ideas of social standing and class collapsed. At the front, the sharing of common joys and common sorrows led to a previously unknown camaraderie between citizens. At the front, everyone could see that the common fate towered above the individual fate.

One more thing grew in front fighters, despite the bitter relentlessness of the battle: The sense of a certain inner connection with front fighters across no man's land, who bore the same burdens, stood in the same mud, were threatened by the same death.

This feeling of connectedness remains to this day.

When front fighters meet, though they were once enemies, they now share the same memories and opinions. They talk of the World War, but behind their words they hope for peace. The front fighters are, therefore, called to be a bridge of understanding, helping one nation to understand another when politicians are unable to find the way.

It is no accident that the states which are entirely led by front fighters — Germany and Italy — are working hardest for world peace. And it is no accident that when the front fighters Hitler and Mussolini met, they quickly developed a warm personal relationship.

We have signed a treaty that serves peace with our Polish neighbor, where a soldier — Marshall Pilsudski — is in charge.

And the strongest support for Hitler's efforts to bring about an understanding with our western neighbor comes from France's front soldiers.

We front soldiers do not want incompetent diplomacy to lead us once again into catastrophe, whose chief victims would once again be front soldiers. We soldiers on all sides

feel free of the responsibility for the last war. We want to fight together to prevent a new catastrophe. We want to join in building together what we together destroyed during the war.

It is high time for a true understanding between the nations. It must be an understanding that rests on mutual respect, since only that can last — the kind of respect that characterizes the relations between former front soldiers.

Let there be no doubt: Most large states have piled up more war material than ever before. It is war material that threatens to become obsolete, but still threatens distrustful nations with a terrible powder keg. The slightest cause, like that cursed shot fired in Sarajevo — perhaps from the pistol of a fool — might suffice to bring forth armies of millions, against the will of the affected peoples. Whole regions might be plowed up by tens of thousands of shells of every size and weight, cities and villages might be transformed into seas of flame, all life might perish in clouds of gas.

He who fought in the World War has an inkling of what a modern war with its perfected weapons might mean.

And so I turn to my comrades from the front of the World War, both here and abroad.

Be honest! Once we stood out there, proud to be true men — soldiers, fighters, far from the routine of our former lives. We sometimes may have enjoyed a life that stood in stark contrast to the decadence that modern culture and its excesses bring. We felt superior to those far behind the lines who had nothing to do with life at the front. We felt that we were defending the life of our nation, that we were the bearers of its future.

Sometimes we had glad and cheerful hours. We attempted to live each minute of the life that had been given us with double intensity. None of us wanted to have the time at the front fade from memory.

But be honest again! We sensed the horror of death. We probably saw death more terribly and intensely than any who came before us. We crouched in the trenches, waiting for devastating attacks. We held our breath in fear when we heard the shells rushing toward us, when mines exploded near us. Our hearts almost burst as we vainly sought cover from the zinging of machine guns. We thought we were suffocating behind our gas masks. We staggered through water-filled trenches. We kept watch on frosty nights in the mud of shell holes. We endured days and weeks of horror during the great battles. We froze and starved and sometimes came near to desperation. We heard the cries of the badly wounded, we saw those gasping for breath after gas attacks. We met the blind staggering along, we heard the death rattles of the dying. Our last hopes for life vanished amidst the corpses of our comrades. We saw the misery of refugees behind us. We saw the widows and orphans, the cripples and the suffering, the sick children, the starving women.

Be honest! Did not each of us say: Why is all this happening? Does it have to be? Cannot humanity be spared this in the future?!

Still we held on — on our side and on the other side! We held on as men doing their duty, who displayed discipline and loyalty, men who abhorred cowardice.

Today I raise the same question to all the world — as a front fighter to front fighters, as a leader of one people to the leaders of other peoples: Must it be?! Can we not together through good will spare humanity from this?!

Someone might ask me: Why do you raise your voice for the first time today? Why were you silent in past years?

This is my answer: Because my voice would have been mixed together in Germany with the voices of traitors to their own people — with the voices of those who once attacked our front soldiers from the rear — with the voices of those who besmeared front soldiers and praised cowards — with the voices of those in Germany who have the Treaty of Versailles on their consciences. I wanted nothing to do with them.

Today I may speak because a man of my people has restored the honor of this people before the world. Today I may speak because this man has silenced the traitors. Today I may speak because the world knows that a National Socialist fighter is no coward. Today I may speak because the leader of my people extends the hand of peace to the world. Today I may speak because Adolf Hitler, the bravest of the brave, keeps me from being misunderstood or confused with cowards.

Today I must speak because I support the man who attempts to save the world at the last moment from catastrophe. Today I raise my voice because I want to warn the world not to confuse the Germany of today, the Germany of peace, with the Germany that was, with the Germany of pacifism!

People must know this: The horrors of the war are always before us, and the postwar generation wants war no more than the old generation. But no one can “stroll through” Germany. Just as the French defended every inch of their soil in the great war with all their might, and would do so again today, so too would we Germans today. The French front soldier above all will understand us when we say to those who play with the idea of another war — which naturally others would have to fight at the front, not they: “Just try to attack us! Just try to march into the new Germany! The world will see the spirit of the new Germany! It would fight for its freedom as no nation before it has ever fought!

The French people know how one defends his own soil. Each **[German]** woods, each hill, each farm would have to be paid for in blood! Old and young would dig into the soil of the homeland! They would defend themselves with unequalled fanaticism!

And even if the superiority of modern weapons triumphed, the path through the Reich would be a path of grim sacrifice for the invaders as well, for never was a nation so sure of the justice of its cause and of the duty to defend itself to the utmost as our nation is today.

But we do not believe the well-poisoners of international relations who want to suggest to us that some nation wishes to disturb the peace of Germany, and therefore of Europe, if not even the world.

We particularly do not believe this is true of the French people. We know that this people, too, longs for peace. Just as we front fighters felt, so also did the French population behind the lines, which always saw the war as a disaster for them and for the whole world: "Malheur pour nos — malheur pour vos — malheur pour tout le monde!"

We in Germany — and particularly Germany's front soldiers — have responded with sympathy to the voices in the French veteran's organizations calling for honest understanding with Germany. This call surely comes both from experience with the true nature of war as well as from the esteem that France's front soldiers feel for the achievements of German front soldiers.

France's soldiers know the bravery the Germans displayed against superior forces for four and a half years. And German front soldiers can never deny the French front soldier the honor due his bravery. This bravery finds expression in the fact that France's army had the highest losses on the Allied side.

Front soldiers want peace.

The peoples want peace.

Germany's government wants peace.

Even if the words of leading representatives of the French government from time to time do not display to us a spirit of understanding, we do not give up hope that despite it all, France's government wants peace. Since the French people surely want peace, we are convinced that France's government does not want war with Germany.

And if leading French spokesmen do not speak the language of the French people or France's front fighters, we may not take their speeches as the thinking of France's leadership. A Frenchman who knows the people and politics of his land well told me: "Take pity on us! We still have a parliamentary government!" He was saying that statesmen in their speeches sometimes are forced to say not what they think, but what parliamentary majorities wish to hear. But we know that parliamentary majorities are not representative of the opinions of the people, but rather of interest groups that often represent forces outside the nation.

History surely will give more laurels to men who in difficult times find the way to bring understanding between peoples, thereby rescuing culture, than to men who believe they can win victories by political and military aggression, or even those who achieve real victories.

The peoples themselves will thank those who secure peace, for unemployment with all its resulting social misery, is primarily the result of too little commerce between the nations. Such trade is always hindered by a lack of confidence.

It is undoubtedly the case that good relations between Germany and France serve not only the two nations as a whole, but also each individual within both peoples. Concretely, each Frenchman and each German in the long term will have higher income or higher pay.

Just as little as war and the continuation of war by other means under the name of "peace" benefit culture and the prosperity of the nations, so a true peace brings advantages for all.

True peace and real confidence between the nations enable a reduction in the armaments that today demand a large part of the wealth of nations as well as that of individual citizens.

Adolf Hitler has said repeatedly that Germany wishes only equality in all areas, including armaments. Such an understanding between Germany and its neighbors will enable Germany to be satisfied with its limited armaments, which are necessary to guarantee its security and thereby peace.

A defenseless nation is a danger to peace. Its defenseless all too easily invites the "attention" of easy attacks by foreign armies. If one people is defenseless among heavily armed peoples, it is all too easy for honor-hungry men to earn cheap laurels, for governments to divert their own peoples by the foreign adventure of a war.

My party comrades, the veterans among you, one of whom I am proud to be, can testify that veterans wish peace from their deepest convictions.

The world knows that the front fighter Adolf Hitler reveals his true thinking with surprising openness. The front fighters in the German government want honorable peace and understanding. I appeal to the front fighters in other states, and to those of good will in the governments of these states, to support us in this goal.

I direct this appeal from the holy soil of East Prussia to the front soldiers of the world. Here on this German borderland the great world struggle began, with its terrible sacrifices, sacrifices from which the warring nations to this day have yet to recover. May the historic battleground from which I speak add strength to an earnest call for peace. On Germany's eastern border, treaties guarantee peace for the inhabitants of large neighboring states. May the governments of the peoples on the other borders of our Reich soon come to see that there is greater security for their citizens in peaceful treaties than in piling up war material. That is our hope.

The memory of Germany's dead, many of whom fell for East Prussia, will always make Germany's desire for peace strong and powerful!

The veterans of the front and the young fighters for a free, proud, and peaceful Reich greet the front soldiers and the Führer Adolf Hitler.

Electing Adolf Hitler Führer

Speech by Rudolf Hess on 14 August 1934

After the death of Hindenburg on 2 August 1934, Hitler called a referendum to approve his assumption of full power as Führer and Chancellor of Germany. Rudolf Hess gave this speech on 14 August 1934, shortly before the 19 August referendum in which 90% of the voters approved Hitler's increased powers.

The source: "Die Wahl Adolf Hitlers zum Führer," in Rudolf Hess, *Reden* (Munich: Zentralverlag der NSDAP., 1938), pp. 52-63.

National Socialists! Fellow German citizens!

I have rarely given a speech as difficult as this one. It is a challenge to attempt to prove the good of something as obvious as Hitler's assumption of Hindenburg's position. For fourteen years I have been convinced that he is the only man able to master Germany's fate. This conviction has grown over the years, as the original emotional feeling found new support in endless ways that have demonstrated Adolf Hitler's remarkable leadership abilities. It is hard for me, now that I see the realization of fourteen years of hopes, to gather the various reasons that explain how Adolf Hitler has become the highest and only Führer of the German people.

Whether through good luck or providence, I found in the summer of 1920 a small room in the Sterneckerbräu in which one Adolf Hitler, whom I had never heard of, gave a speech to a few dozen people. His clear, logical and persuasive speech laid out a new political program. This man expressed my own vague feelings as a veteran of the war, making clear what was necessary for the nation's salvation. He outlined a new Germany from the heart of a front soldier, a Germany that I suddenly realized was the one that had to become reality!

This man had driving passion, persuasive logic, and astonishing knowledge. A powerful faith streamed from him — I had never experienced its like. What was most remarkable was that I and the other entirely rational members of the audience did not laugh as he in all seriousness explained that the flag of the new movement for which he and his movement fought would one day fly over the Reichstag, over the Palace of Berlin, indeed over every German building. It would be the victorious symbol of a new, honorable, nationalist and socialist Germany.

At that moment in the Sterneckerbräu there were really only two possibilities. Either I would leave this fool immediately, or — as I did — accept the conviction: This man will save Germany, if anyone can!

I pledged my conviction to a friend, and on that very evening became the most passionate admirer and loyal follower of this Führer.

In the long years that followed, the rest of the world laughed and mocked us, and the newspapers spread their poison and scorn about this "madman," but nothing could shake my faith and readiness to give my all for this man, so long as he did not lose faith in himself or his mission.

I remember well even today a visit I made to Hitler in the small room he sublet in Munich. He raged against a Munich newspaper that mocked him and his idea. "I will show them whether I am to be taken seriously or not," he exclaimed.

Still, his opponents did not take him seriously then, or for many years after. Luckily so! For the most serious error his enemies made was that they did not recognize early enough what a danger he was to them. They missed the opportunity to destroy him and his small following when it was still possible. The mighty tree of today, able to withstand any storm, was then only a tender plant.

But like so many other things in the Führer's life, fate probably determined that those around him were blind enough to lose valuable time by fighting him only with ridicule. Providence, of which the Führer often speaks with such faith, preserved him and his movement from destruction, preserving both for its purposes.

I knew Adolf Hitler as he walked through the streets of Munich in a shabby gray coat, often hungry, accompanied only by a few friends, posting flyers. He was armed only with a thick oak walking stick, which he only too often had to use when his opponents from the then USPD, or the Spartakus Bund, or some middle class party found the primitive truths on these flyers unpleasant.

I can still remember how he, at the head of his "whole party" broke up a meeting of Bavarian separatists, always putting himself in the way of the greatest danger. Astonishingly, amidst all the daily tasks and annoyances, he never lost sight of the larger goal. He always presented his vision vividly to his followers.

In later years I saw this man during the triumphs and defeats of his movement. At the moments of the worst defeats when his followers often were near desperation, it was always he who restored the faith of the doubters, gave them new enthusiasm, new faith. I was with him in the Landsberg prison, when all seemed lost and his movement disintegrated as his subordinates fought. I remember when there was the danger that his parole would be canceled and he would have to stay behind bars for another four or five years! The chances of realizing his ideas seemed absolutely nonexistent then, but at that very moment he laid out the methods he would use to rebuild the movement under the new circumstances and by rejecting illegal methods. Then as always he proved himself a master at adapting to new situations, in breaking radically with methods he saw as outdated or ineffective.

With the certainty of a great leader, in the middle of what seemed to be the total collapse of all his efforts, he explained to me that he would need several years to rebuild the movement, and that it would be seven years before he had the power to force his enemies to bend to his will. That was in the winter of 1924/25. Seven years later it was 1932!

That was the year in which the forces of the past attempted in vain to stop the final victory of National Socialism, the year in which every attempt to stop Adolf Hitler and his movement failed, in which in fact every shameless lying attack worked in the end to his advantage.

The Führer said more often than in the past: "The others can do what they want. When an idea is right, when it is fought for consistently, when the movement that fights for it is well organized, and when the leadership is determined to go its way regardless of the difficulties, one day with mathematical certainty it will be victorious! The longer they succeed in holding back our victory, the more powerful it will be! It will fall into our laps like overripe fruit!"

These words from the decisive year 1932 explain the sudden and total National Socialist seizure of power in 1933, which so surprised the rest of the world.

Looking back I am convinced that our delayed victory, the fourteen years that sometimes seemed to us as if they would never end, was fate's way of preparing our people for the seizure of power. It was a necessity of fate, just as the early death of the Führer's parents acquainted him with bitter poverty. That poverty forced him to become a construction worker. He came to understand the poverty of his fellow human beings and the lot of the "proletariat." The daily struggle for survival in the primitive cultural conditions of the era gave the Führer a deep understanding of his fellow working class citizens.

It was also a necessity of fate that he served at the front during the World War, for he learned a contempt of danger. He became hard. The war brought him together with all levels of the German people and showed him the destructiveness of class and rank. Most importantly, it taught him to understand the people and to speak their language.

The revolutionary year 1918 was a necessity of fate for Adolf Hitler, for despite its criminal leadership it cleared away relics of the past that later would have created difficulties for the National Socialist Revolution. And the revolt of 1918 brought signs of collapse and revealed with naked clarity the international forces and their destructive effects on Germany in a way that created the psychological prerequisites that enabled the hard measures of the later National Socialist government to succeed.

The attempt to seize power in November 1923 was ordained by fate, just as was its bloody collapse. If the Führer had not acted then, the masses would later have lost faith in him as a Führer when he constantly called for patience and postponed the seizure of power. Only his willingness to act resolutely when necessary, as demonstrated in November 1923, provided the proof that he would when necessary take the most forceful course. It proved that he chose to renounce force in the years before 1933 not because he was a coward. And National Socialism could not have taken power in 1923, since the people were not yet ready for National Socialism, nor was National Socialism ready to lead the people. What was obvious to everyone in Germany in 1933 would have seemed arrogance in 1923. The supporters of the parties of that day had not yet had sufficient time to recognize the weaknesses of their leaders.

The narrowest chance of fate prevented the Führer from entering the government in 1932. He would have been joined with men who inwardly were still his enemies and would have caused great damage as members of the government.

And surely it was providence that preserved the life of the old Field Marshall and Reich President to enable his good name and protecting hand to guard the young National Socialist government until Adolf Hitler's abilities as a leader had been proven to everyone at home and abroad, until his reputation was sufficient to assume the full leadership of the Reich.

Providence has clearly been at work in Adolf Hitler's life. Only so can we understand how this man, the son of a minor official, withstood hunger and privation and fought unaided powerful enemies in the press and business, powerful parties at home and abroad, to become the Führer of one of the great nations of the world, chancellor of the German Reich, holder of the office of Reich President. This is a miracle without precedent in the history of

the world. In the midst of bitter need, a people finds the man to rescue it. There is a force of history at work here which we still do not understand.

The need of our people was great. A great man was required to meet it.

Providence gave him the gifts and the strength to move on both in good times and bad, enabling him over the course of time to reach his goal: the salvation of Germany!

Providence works through in a way both inexplicable yet clear to all who have the good fortune to be near to him. How often has he said to me: "I know that my decision or action is correct. I cannot explain at the moment why, but I feel that it is right and the future will prove it so." Invariably the course of events proved that the inexplicable feelings of the Führer led him down a sure path.

The great historian Treitschke held the ability to see things correctly as the decisive ability of a statesman, more important even than talent. What leader has ever had this ability more than Adolf Hitler? The proof is in his speeches, even those from 1920. Rarely have political conditions and developments been predicted more accurately, seldom have conclusions been drawn more clearly, thanks to his ability to see the fundamental nature of the most difficult and complicated things.

The "simple understanding" of the genius is able to see the essential and the obvious.

The Führer adds to the ability to see correctly, which the historian sees as more critical than talent, not only talent, but also genius. The ability to see correctly, along with genius, to which must be added the workings of providence, gives us an explanation for the miracle that has happened before our eyes in the past few years, particularly since Hitler's assumption of power.

Is not the transformation of our people a miracle! It shows itself in its return to its essence, to the sources of its strength, in its reawakening pride and honor, in its will to self assertion in the world, in its ability to free itself from international poisons and from signs of corruption in all areas of life! Is it a miracle that Adolf Hitler won the battle against unemployment in so short a time? That he put people to work to meet daily needs as well as to advance culture? The great highways, canals and buildings will proclaim to coming generations the Hitler Era of the German people. Is it not a miracle that a nation once divided by class and rank, divided by petty state pride in Prussia, Bavaria, Saxony and elsewhere — now works together with mutual understanding for the great common tasks and for the preservation of the nation and its people?

As I said when I began, I cannot explain why Hitler, and only he, can be the Führer. Who could suggest someone worthier and more able to fill the office of Reich President, the highest leader of the Reich?

Someone might say that it is not good to put all power in one hand. Let me reply that in a difficult time the Romans gave full power to a young and capable leader — and the Romans knew something about governing! They knew that "men make history." They knew that in

times of crisis, strong personalities must guide the state, personalities bound to the living essence of their people.

Someone may say that it is not good to put all power in one hand, since Adolf Hitler might use his authority arbitrarily and thoughtlessly!

To that I can only say: The conscience of a moral personality is a far greater protection against the misuse of an office than is the supervision of parliament or the separation of powers. I know no one who has a stronger conscience, or is more true to his people, than Adolf Hitler.

Over the years I have seen him struggle to make difficult decisions, always checking again and again with the experts in the field until he was certain that his decision was absolutely correct. I know how many sleepless nights his decision to take Germany out of the League of Nations cost him, how he listened to all who had objections. I know that he was unable to rest until he had refuted them by clear logic. Only then did he decide, and accepted the full responsibility.

The Führer's highest court is his conscience and his responsibility to his people and to history.

He will also from time to time allow the people itself to pass judgment on his general policy. This will regularly reaffirm his leadership.

He knows that both his honor and his work are at risk. He cannot pass the responsibility for his decisions to irresponsible parliamentary majorities, as do the statesmen of all other nations. That also means that his freedom of action is not restricted or watered down by parliamentary bodies or other forces. This above all is why in desperate times people and nations need an absolute leader — assuming he possesses the necessary abilities — and why such a leader can be necessary to the continued existence of the government and people.

Treitschke said that absolute leadership is either the best or the worst form of government, depending on the personality of the leader. We know that Adolf Hitler is both born and called to be a leader, and that he has shown himself through all his actions to be a morally upright person. As sole ruler he is the best possible form of government for Germany — and heaven knows that in its current crisis Germany needs the best possible form of government!

A Führer whose goal is to serve his people is in times of crisis a better guarantee of peace to other nations than is a parliamentary majority, which may lack the will at the critical moment to keep its people from stumbling into misfortune, as Lloyd George suggested the nations stumbled into the World War. In recent weeks, Adolf Hitler has made rapid and firm decisions advancing the cause of peace in Europe that demonstrate his statesmanship. Those states who today oppose us may not be willing to admit it, but history will.

German citizens! Consider with all seriousness the international significance of the referendum on 19 August. Talk with everyone in your circle of acquaintances — family

members, workmates, relatives, with everyone you come in contact with. Remember that the world is watching to see if a united German people will be loyal to its Führer.

Hundreds of thousands of journalists are waiting to announce the expected collapse of National Socialism to their readers. They will do this if even a few less Germans go to the polls than did on 12 November of last year. They hope for a collapse of National Socialism, for they know this would mean the collapse of Germany.

By voting yes on 19 August, the German people will demonstrate to the world that we see in Adolf Hitler the Führer given to us by providence. We Germans approve of what he has done at home and abroad for Germany and trust his decisions for the future. Germany sees Adolf Hitler as Hindenburg's proper successor. The entire German people now gives Hitler the name of honor that the National Socialist movement has long given him: the Führer!

This word is more than a title, it is a confession and a certainty: My Führer!

Furthermore, the entire German people says to the world: Adolf Hitler is and will remain our Führer, because his policies are the policies of the entire German nation. His rule guarantees Germany's stability. Through him and his movement, Germany has become a unified Reich. Since we want to remain a united German Reich, we want Adolf Hitler at our head. Since we know that power struggles between individuals or interest groups are unthinkable and impossible under his leadership, we want him as Germany's leader.

Through him, Fate realizes its purpose: Saving Germany from the hunger of misery of Bolshevism. We firmly believe that saving Germany from Bolshevism also rescued Europe from the danger of red annihilation. We Germans see it as our duty to thank Fate by affirming this man as the Führer of Germany.

One more thing the German people want to say to the world on 19 August: We want the work begun in Hitler's name to continue: the battle against unemployment, the freeing of our conscience, the moral renewal of Germany's youth, the strengthening of our sense of honor. We Germans know that Hitler wants what we all want: economic equality with the other nations of the world, the political and military peace with the other peoples of the world, a return to prosperity and culture after decades of decline and decay.

This we say to our Führer on 19 August: We are bound to you in an indissoluble unity in the fight for Germany's future. With you, we long for the preservation of peace and are prepared to follow your command to defend our people's peace.

We are proud and happy to have one of history's greats, a son of our people, among us during our life times. The yes that we give affirms his leadership to the world, and thanks him at the same time.

German workers! I speak particularly to you. Be proud that you may on 19 August affirm as leader of Germany a man of the German working class. Be proud that you may symbolically say to one of your own on 19 August: We want you, Adolf Hitler, as German Chancellor and German Reich President, you, a German worker! Where once kings, Kaisers and presidents ruled Germany, now by our will and the will of the German people stands for the first time a

German worker. He is a worker who knows how hard the life of his former comrades still is, those who must struggle daily for their basic needs, and whose goal is above all to improve their lot as quickly as possible.

My fellow German citizens! You will vote yes for Adolf Hitler! And if you are asked why you voted for him, you will be able to answer:

We voted for Adolf Hitler:

Because he is the man who from his experiences as a Front soldier developed a world view that is the foundation for all that is happening in Germany.

Because his fifteen year struggle against a hostile world is a model of strength and courage.

Because he always acts at the right moment, thereby showing that he is a heroic leader.

Because he does nothing for himself, but everything for Germany and for the future of his people.

Because he has given all of us a new faith in Germany.

Because he has given our lives meaning once more by showing us why we Germans are on the earth.

Because he is the instrument of the will of a higher power.

In sum, because he is a true Führer!

With our "yes" votes, we Germans will say on 19 August:

To you, our Führer, we pledge our loyalty — Adolf Hitler, we believe in you!

The Launching of the Training Ship *Horst Wessel*

Speech by Rudolf Hess on 13 June 1936

Horst Wessel was one of the martyrs of the Nazi movement. He wrote what became the "Horst Wessel Song," the Nazi Party's anthem. Rudolf Hess gave this speech on 13 June 1936 at the launching of a training ship named after Wessel.

The source: "An das Schulschiff 'Horst Wessel'," in Rudolf Hess, *Reden* (Munich: Zentralverlag der NSDAP., 1938), pp. 191-194.

This ship is to bear the name of the poet and fighter at the front lines of the German revolution, "Horst Wessel," just as its sister ship the *Gorch Fock* bears the name of the poet and fighter in the war at sea.

These naval training ships bear the names of two fighters and poets who stand for the same idea, of men who gave their lives for this idea.

The idea is "Germany."

It is the Germany that millions longed for as they fought for Germany in the Great War;

the Germany that they saw in their mind's eyes as the coming Germany;

the Germany born of their common experiences of struggle, of sorrow, of the deaths of German men;

of the Germany for which it was worthy to die.

They hoped that by sacrificing their individual lives, a German community worthy of their lives would grow.

They believed in a Germany in the spirit of the Front, of a National Socialist Germany, even if they did not know the words "National Socialism."

The Front soldiers brought this idea of Germany home with them. The front soldier Adolf Hitler made this idea of Germany the idea of the homeland, the idea of the German people, thus realizing the legacy of the Front. From this idea of Germany Adolf Hitler created the proud reality of the Third Reich. Had Adolf Hitler not lived, the idea of the Front soldiers would have died with them.

During Adolf Hitler's battle to make this idea the idea of Germany, during the struggle for the Third Reich, Horst Wessel gave his life in the service of the Führer and of his idea.

Horst Wessel is the model of National Socialism.

To spread the faith in National Socialism to the workers, the student Horst Wessel became the worker Horst Wessel. He united intellectual and physical workers, he united the nationalist of the idea with the socialist of the deed.

So that he could spread the faith in National Socialism to those whose lives were hard, he gave up his middle class life and lived among the workers, among the unemployed.

So that he could show his readiness to give his life for the idea, he carried high the flag at the head of his unit through the Berlin Communist neighborhoods, though he knew that the Red Front had determined to kill him.

Because Horst Wessel was one of National Socialism's most effective fighters, they wanted him dead. But Horst Wessel's death only gave him greater strength.

Shot by the leaders of the Marxist revolution, Horst Wessel became a symbol of the German Revolution, and a powerful model for German revolutionaries.

Horst Wessel's lips fell silent, but his song became the song of the German Revolution, the song of the Germany the Revolution brought about.

Horst Wessel died, but "Horst Wessel" became immortal.

Carry, oh ship, his immortal name across the seas, carry it under the flag for which Horst Wessel fought and died.

Carry with you Horst Wessel's spirit.

Imbue with Horst Wessel's spirit the boys who will become men while serving under you.

Imbue them with the spirit of the Front.

Imbue them with the knowledge that the greatest nationalism and the truest socialism are the same: the spirit of simple service to the community.

Imbue them with the spirit of camaraderie, free from the old concepts of class and ancestry, with the spirit of community, of the sacrifice of each for the other, of the spirit to accept privation for the sake of an idea —

of the spirit that values truth above appearance —

of the spirit willing to give one's life for Germany,

Imbue them with the spirit that will hold the flag high to the last breath, though the ship may sink!

Imbue them with Horst Wessel's love, imbue them with Horst Wessel's loyalty to the Führer.

