



Volume 6. Weimar Germany, 1918/19–1933

Otto Meissner's Minutes of the Second Meeting between Hitler and Hindenburg
(August 13, 1932)

The July 1932 Reichstag elections witnessed a significant Nazi victory. The Nazis received 37% of the votes: the most of any party, but still shy of an absolute majority. Rather than use these newly won seats to support the Papen government, Hitler sought to form his own Nazi government. Hitler demanded the chancellorship for himself as well as key cabinet positions for Nazis. Papen refused Hitler's proposal outright. Still, he himself was unable to form a government with a majority in the Reichstag. In the end, political power rested with President Hindenburg, who had recourse to Article 48 of the Weimar Constitution and the right to appoint a chancellor. Unlike the previous chancellor, Brüning, Papen benefitted from the president's support, and Hindenburg refused to be swayed by Hitler's case when the two met on August 13, 1932. Hitler's unsuccessful bid for the chancellorship resulted in even stronger Nazi opposition to the Papen government, but it also dealt a serious blow to the advance of the Nazi movement.

Present were: President Hindenburg, Chancellor [Franz] von Papen, State Secretary Dr. [Otto] Meissner, Adolf Hitler, Minister Dr. [Wilhelm] Frick, Captain (ret.) [Ernst] Röhm

The President of the Reich opened the discussion by declaring to Hitler that he was ready to let the National Socialist Party and their leader Hitler participate in the Reich Government and would welcome their cooperation. He then put the question to Hitler whether he was prepared to participate in the present government of von Papen. Herr Hitler declared that, for reasons which he had explained in detail to the Reich President that morning, his taking any part in cooperation with the existing government was out of the question. Considering the importance of the National Socialist movement he must demand the full and complete leadership of government and state for himself and his party.

The Reich President in reply said firmly that he must answer this demand with a clear, unyielding No. He could not justify before God, before his conscience or before the fatherland the transfer of the whole authority of government to a single party, especially to a party that was biased against people who had different views from their own. There were a number of other reasons against it upon which he did not wish to enlarge in detail, such as fear or increased unrest, the effect on foreign countries, etc.

Herr Hitler repeated that any other solution was unacceptable to him.

To this the Reich President replied: 'So you will go into opposition?'

Hitler: 'I have now no alternative.'

The Reich President: 'In that case the only advice I can give you is to engage in this opposition in a chivalrous way and to remain conscious of your responsibility and duty towards the fatherland. I have had no doubts about your love for the fatherland. I shall intervene sharply against any acts of terrorism or violence such as have been committed by members of the SA sections. We are both old comrades and we want to remain so, since the course of events may bring us together again later on. Therefore, I shall shake hands with you now in a comradely way.'

This discussion was followed by a short conversation in the corridor between the Reich Chancellor and me, and Herr Hitler and his companions, in which Herr Hitler expressed the view that future developments would lead to the solution suggested by him and to the overthrow of the Reich President. The Government would get into a difficult position; the opposition would become very sharp and he could assume no responsibility for the consequences.

The conversation lasted for about twenty minutes.

Source of English translation: Jeremy Noakes and Geoffrey Pridham, eds., *Nazism 1919-1945*, Vol. 1, *The Rise to Power 1919-1934*. Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 1998, pp. 104-05.

Source of original German text: Walther Hubatsch, *Hindenburg und der Staat*. Gottingen: Musterschmidt Verlag, 1966, p. 338.