



## German History in Documents and Images

Volume 6. Weimar Germany, 1918/19–1933

Hamburg Schoolteacher Louise Solmitz on Hitler's Seizure of Power (January-February 1933)

Hamburg schoolteacher Louise Solmitz's enthusiastic response to the news that a cabinet of "national" concentration had been formed with Hitler as chancellor was characteristic of the attitude of the nationalist conservative middle class. Like Hitler's allies in the conservative elite, members of this segment of society believed that Hitler's radicalism would be tamed in an alliance with conservative ministers. Besides Hitler, there were only two other National Socialists in the cabinet: Wilhelm Frick, Reich Interior Minister, and Hermann Göring, Reich Minister Without Portfolio and acting Prussian Interior Minister. The promise of a vague chance of national unity dispelled any reservations people may have had about the National Socialists. Louise Solmitz's response also shows the extent to which anti-Semitism was underestimated – particularly in light of the fact that Solmitz herself was married to a baptized Jew.

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### 30. January 1933

And what did Dr H. bring us? The news that his double, Hitler, is Chancellor of the Reich! And what a Cabinet!!! One we didn't dare dream of in July. Hitler, Hugenberg, Seldte, Papen!!!

On each one of them depends part of Germany's hopes. National Socialist drive, German National reason, the non-political Stahlhelm, not to forget Papen. It is so incredibly marvelous that I am writing it down quickly before the first discordant note comes, for when has Germany ever experienced a blessed summer after a wonderful spring? Probably only under Bismarck. What a great thing Hindenburg has achieved! How well he neutralized Hammerstein who was presumptuous enough to bring politics into the Reichswehr!

Huge torchlight procession in the presence of Hindenburg and Hitler by National Socialists and Stahlhelm, who at long last are collaborating again. This is a memorable 30 January!

[ . . . ]

### 6. February 1933

Torchlight procession of National Socialists and Stahlhelm! A wonderfully elevating experience for all of us. Göring says the day of Hitler's and the nationalist Cabinet's appointment was something like 1914, and this too was something like 1914; after Dr H. had only recently

remarked that damned little of this spirit had survived on the way from Berlin to Hamburg between 30 January and 3 February.

On Sunday, the Reds waded through relentless rain—Gisela saw them—with wives and children to make the procession longer. The Socialists and Reds will inevitably have to give in now.

But now the weather was beautiful. Dry and calm, a few degrees above freezing. At 9.30 p.m. we took up our position, Gisela with us. I said she should stay till the end for the sake of the children. So far the impressions they had had of politics had been so deplorable that they should now have a really strong impression of nationhood, as we had once, and store it in their memories. And so they did. It was 10 p.m. by the time the first torchlights came, and then 20,000 brown shirts followed one another like waves in the sea, their faces shone with enthusiasm in the light of the torches. 'Three cheers for our Führer, our Chancellor Adolf Hitler....' They sang 'The Republic is shit' and called the colors 'black-red-mustard'<sup>1</sup> and 'The murderous reds have bloody hands and we won't forget the murder at the Sternschanz.' Dreckmann was murdered there and I happened to spot his name on one of the flags, probably the one of the section he had belonged to. The military standards are much too Roman in appearance.

Now came the Stahlhelm, a grey stream; quieter, more spiritual perhaps. On their beautiful flags they carried our old colors black-white-red,<sup>2</sup> with mourning crêpe at the top. [ . . . ] How wonderful and uplifting it is that the quarrels between brothers that once so depressed us have been settled! It should always be like tonight.

But between the SA and the Stahlhelm there was marching a delegation of nationalist students. And they won the hearts of Hamburg. The women at the greengrocery stalls and their customers, all the women there were saying the same thing: 'Those students! Simply charming. They were the best, weren't they?'

And it was a magnificent picture, the snow-white, scarlet, moss-green and black colors, the fantastic berets, boots and gauntlets in the dancing light of the torches, the swords, the flags. They were followed by the Stahlhelm with shining *Schellenbaum*, playing the old Prussian army marches.

The SS brought up the rear of the procession.

We were drunk with enthusiasm, blinded by the light of the torches right in our faces, and always enveloped in their vapor as in a cloud of sweet incense. And in front of us men, men,

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<sup>1</sup> Black-red-gold were the colors of the Republican flag. 'Mustard' is particularly derogatory since the German word can be used colloquially to mean 'nonsense'.

<sup>2</sup> The colors of the old imperial flag.

men, brightly colored, grey, brown, a torrent lasting an hour and 20 minutes. In the wavering light of the torches one seemed to see only a few types recurring again and again, but there were between twenty-two and twenty-five thousand different faces!

Next to us a little boy of three kept raising his tiny hand: 'Heil Hitler, Heil Hitlerman!'

An SA man said to Gisela that morning: 'One doesn't say Heil Hitler any more, one says Heil Germany.' 'Death to the Jews' was also sometimes called out and they sang of the blood of the Jews which would squirt from their knives. (*subsequent addition: Who took that seriously then?*)

Opposite the Eimsbüttel Sports Hall (what a pity we could not see it) stood the leader of the Hamburg National Socialists—and beside him with his hand touching his hat, the leader of the Hamburg Stahlhelm, Lieutenant-Commander Lauenstein, who a few months before had been stabbed by SA men (ten minutes from where he now stood) and now saluted the procession of the SA, just as the SA leader saluted that of the Stahlhelm.

What moments!

What a marvelous thought

The National Socialists have much more new blood and young people than the Stahlhelm. Good looking, fresh, gay youths in the procession.

When everything was over, it was actually not yet over, for the last SS men were joined by a crowd of gay people with left-over torches, who made their own procession, happy to join in the occasion.

Finally, the torches were thrown together at the Kaiser Friedrich embankment, after a march from the Lübeck Gate. It was 11.30 p.m. before all was over.

Unity at last, at long last, but for how long? We are after all Germans.

What must Hitler feel when he sees the hundred thousand people whom he summoned, to whom he gave a national soul, people who are ready to die for him. Not only metaphorically speaking but in bitter earnest. [ . . . ]

And these floods of people in Hamburg are only a small fraction of Hitler's support in the whole Reich. [ . . . ]

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. 129-31.

Source of original German text: "Louise Solmitz: Auszüge aus den Tagebüchern," reprinted in Werner Jochmann, ed., *Nationalsozialismus und Revolution: Ursprung und Geschichte der NSDAP in Hamburg; 1922-1933*. Frankfurt: Europäische Verl.-Anst., 1963, pp. 421-24.