



Volume 7. Nazi Germany, 1933-1945

Excerpt from the Minutes of a Meeting between the Working Group of the Economic Team of the Iron-Making Industry and Hermann Göring on Increasing Iron Production (March 17, 1937)

While the war preparations of the 1930s boosted most sectors of the German economy, heavy industry benefited from the armament program to a special extent. Still, conflicts were unavoidable, since the state often used inefficient means that opposed the rules of economic rationality to force the self-sufficiency it was seeking. For example, at this particular meeting with high-ranking representatives of the German iron industry (March 17, 1937), Hermann Göring, who was in charge of the Four-Year Plan, demanded a general increase in the industry's production capacity to boost the exploitation of domestic, iron-poor ores. His eventual response to the uncooperative stance of the industrialists of the Ruhr area was to establish the "Reich Works Hermann Göring," which competed with Ruhr enterprises.

[. . .] It is a project such as when one prompts an armaments firm, the capacity of whose plant is only partially utilized by the normal level of orders, nevertheless to expand their plant even though it will be uneconomic to do so. And yet this will have to be done. I am intentionally leaving on one side the question of how far the iron industrialists can manage to do it on their own and how far they will have to be assisted. In the case of vital plants, where the State cannot put so many demands that the firms might go bust, then the State will have to step in and help since these measures must under all circumstances be prepared. The same is true of the production of explosives or field guns, where one also cannot require these projects to be economic. The same is valid for low grade iron ores. For provision must be made so that in the event of Germany being cut off from foreign supplies of iron ore the defense program can still be carried through in total. This does not, of course, imply that the import of rich ores from abroad can be ended but rather that large reserves must be built up so that Germany can stand on its own feet. In the name of the Führer, who has expressly instructed me to declare to you that he does not intend to depart from this path, I state as my view that it must be possible to secure from German soil sufficient ores for military requirements. And, if three times the number of blast furnaces have to be built then three times that number must be built. The program of munitions production and armaments must not be jeopardized, in the event of war, by a shortage of ore. Everything possible must be done by the firms, and the State must step in where the firms are clearly no longer in a position to do so. It is the same for the State as when it has to build battleships, field guns etc.

In this connection, it is important that, in the event of war, Austria's soil will belong to Germany. We must get hold of all the Austrian deposits we can, in order to increase our reserve capacity. Austria is rich in ores.

Source of English translation: Jeremy Noakes and Geoffrey Pridham, eds., *Nazism, 1919-1945*, Vol. 2: *State, Economy and Society 1933-1939*. Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 2001, p. 119.

Source of original German text: Bundesarchiv Koblenz, R 131/1063; reprinted in Wolfgang Ruge and Wolfgang Schumann, eds., *Dokumente zur deutschen Geschichte 1936-1939*. East Berlin, 1977, pp. 46-47.