



## German History in Documents and Images

Volume 6. Weimar Germany, 1918/19–1933

Hitler's Speech to the Industry Club in Düsseldorf (January 27, 1932)

Many business leaders were highly skeptical of the NSDAP, which they viewed as a socialist and anti-capitalist party. Hitler tried to dispel their doubts through personal statements and speaking appearances at companies. At these events, he tried to seem as respectable as possible. He invoked general national feelings, largely refrained from anti-Semitic attacks, and stressed his anti-Marxism. Thanks to these tactics, he often made a positive impression, but the business community still remained distrustful of the NSDAP. The Keppler Circle (named after Hitler's economic adviser Wilhelm Keppler) and the *Arbeitsstelle* Hjalmar Schacht also attempted to improve relations between the Nazis and business leaders. Nevertheless, only a few major industrialists – such as Emil Kirdorf and Fritz Thyssen – openly supported Hitler and his party in the period before January 30, 1933. The speech printed below was given on January 27, 1932, in the large ballroom at the Park Hotel in Düsseldorf. Around 650 members of the Industry Club were in attendance.

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[ . . . ] People say to me so often: 'You are only the drummer of national Germany'. And supposing that I were only the drummer? It would today be a far more statesmanlike achievement to drum once more into this German people a new faith than gradually to squander the only faith they have [ . . . ]. The more you bring a people back into the sphere of faith, of ideals, the more will it cease to regard material distress as the one and only thing that counts. And the weightiest evidence for the truth of that statement is our own German people. We will never forget that the German people waged wars of religion for 150 years with prodigious devotion, that hundreds of thousands of men once left their plot of land, their property, and their belongings simply for an ideal, simply for a conviction. We will never forget that during those 150 years there was no trace of even an ounce of material interest. Then you will understand how mighty is the force of an idea, of an ideal. Only so can you comprehend how it is that in our movement today hundreds of thousands of young men are prepared to risk their lives to withstand our opponents. I know quite well, gentlemen, that when National Socialists march through the streets and suddenly in the evening there arises a tumult and a commotion, then the bourgeois draws back the window-curtain, looks out, and says: 'Once again my night's rest is disturbed: no more sleep for me. Why must these Nazis always be so provocative and run about the place at night?' Gentlemen, if everyone thought like that, then, true enough, no one's sleep at night would be disturbed, but then also the bourgeois today would not be able to venture into the street. If everyone thought in that way, if these young folk had no ideal to move them and drive them forward, then certainly they would gladly be rid of these nightly fights. But remember that it means sacrifice when today many hundreds of thousands of SA and SS men of the National Socialist movement have every day to mount on their lorries, protect meetings,

undertake marches, sacrifice themselves night after night and then come back in the grey dawn to workshop and factory, or as unemployed to take the pittance of the dole: it means sacrifice when from the little they possess they have further to buy their uniforms, their shirts, their badges, yes and even pay their own fares. Believe me, there is already in all this the force of an ideal—a great ideal! And if the whole German nation today had the same faith in its vocation as these hundreds of thousands, if the whole nation possessed this idealism, Germany would stand in the eyes of the world otherwise than she stands now! (*loud applause*). For our situation in the world in its fatal effects is but the result of our own underestimate of German strength. ('*Very true!*') Only when we have once more changed this fatal undervaluation of ourselves can Germany take advantage of the political possibilities which, if we look far enough into the future, can place German life once more upon a natural and secure basis—and that means either new living space [*Lebensraum*] and the development of a great internal market or protection of German economic life against the world without and utilization of all the concentrated strength of Germany. The labour resources of our people, the capacities, we have them already: no one can deny that we are industrious. But we must first refashion the political preconditions: without that, industry and capacity, diligence and economy are in the last resort of no avail; an oppressed nation will not be able to spend on its own welfare even the fruits of its own economy but must sacrifice them on the altar of exactions and of tribute.

And so in contrast to our own official Government I see no hope for the resurrection of Germany if we regard the foreign politics of Germany as the primary factor: our primary need is the restoration of a sound national German body politic armed to strike. In order to realize this end I founded thirteen years ago the National Socialist movement: that movement I have led during the last twelve years and I hope that one day it will accomplish this task and that, as the fairest result of its struggle, it will leave behind it a German body politic completely renewed internally, intolerant of anyone who sins against the nation and its interests, intolerant of anyone who will not acknowledge its vital interests or who opposes them, intolerant of and pitiless towards anyone who shall attempt once more to destroy or undermine this body politic, and yet ready for friendship and peace with anyone who has a wish for peace and friendship (*long and tumultuous applause*).

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. 94-95.

Source of original German text: Max Domarus, *Hitler – Reden und Proklamationen 1932-1945*. Wiesbaden: R. Löwit, 1973, pp. 89-90.