

ties of power would moderate the Nazis' aims and methods. A majority of Germans supported Hitler's call for unity and shared his goals of restoring the German economy, reviving Germany's military power, and raising Germany's standing in the world. Most Germans also agreed with his assessment that communists were mainly responsible for the terrible rifts in German society. The government's proclamation helped to prepare the public for the elimination of a parliamentary system that a growing number of Germans regarded as too permissive, divisive, and ineffective. Although the Nazis themselves did not command an electoral majority, there was a growing consensus for a more unified and authoritarian form of government than the failed Weimar system.

3.1 Proclamation of the Reich Government to the German People, 1 February 1933

More than fourteen years have passed since that ill-fated day when, deluded by promises at home and abroad, the German Volk forgot the most treasured values of our past, the Reich, its honor and its freedom, and thus lost everything. Since those days of betrayal, the Almighty has withheld his blessing from our Volk. Dissension and hatred broke out among us. Millions of the best German men and women from all walks of life watched in profound distress as the unity of the nation disintegrated and dissolved in a tangle of egotistical political opinions, economic interests, and ideological differences. As so often in our history, the portrait of Germany has been one of heartbreaking disunity since this day of revolution. We did not receive the equality and fraternity promised to us, but we did lose our liberty. For the disintegration of the unity of spirit and will of our Volk internally was followed by the decline of its political standing in the world ...

The insane notion of victor and vanquished has destroyed the trust between nations and thereby also the world economy. But the misery of our Volk is dreadful! The misery of millions of unemployed, starving proletarians in industry is being followed by the impoverishment of the entire Mittelstand and artisan vocations. If this disintegration ultimately also engulfs the German peasants, we will be confronted by a catastrophe of incalculable dimensions. For not only will this mean the end of a Reich, but also of a two-thousand-year-old inheritance of the highest and loftiest values of human culture and civilization. The signs of disintegration are all around us. With unprecedented will and violence, Communists attempt with insane methods to poison and demoralize the shaken and uprooted Volk ...

Fourteen years of Marxism have ruined Germany. One year of Bolshevism would destroy Germany. The presently richest and most beautiful cultural areas of the world would be turned into chaos and a heap of ruins. Even the suffering of the last decade and a half would not compare with the misery of a Europe in whose heart the red flag of destruction had been raised. May the thousands of wounded and countless dead that this internal war has already cost serve as a warning signal against the coming storm. In these hours of overwhelming concern for the existence and future of the German nation, the aged leader of the World War appealed to us men in the national parties and organizations to fight under him once more as we had at the front, this time at home, in unity and loyalty, for the salvation of the

Reich. As the venerable Reich President has extended his hand to us to work together, we, the national leaders, vow to God, our conscience, and our Volk that we shall resolutely and steadfastly fulfill the task thus entrusted to us as the national government.

The situation we have inherited is a terrible one. The task we must fulfill is the most difficult one posed to German statesmen within living memory. But our confidence is unbounded, for we believe in our people and their imperishable values. Peasants, workers, and the middle classes must all join together to provide the building blocks for the new Reich. The national government regards as its first and foremost task to restore the unity of spirit and will of our Volk. It will preserve and defend the foundation upon which the strength of our nation rests. It will extend its firm protection to Christianity as the basis of our moral system, and to the family as the nucleus of our Volk and state. It will restore to our Volk, beyond the divisions of rank and class, its consciousness of national and political unity and the duties this entails. It will make reverence for our great past and pride in our ancient traditions the foundation for the education of German youth. In this way it will declare a merciless war against spiritual, political, and cultural nihilism. Germany must not and will not sink into anarchistic communism. In place of turbulent instincts it will again raise national discipline to the guiding principle of our life. In doing so, the government will devote careful attention to those institutions that constitute the true guarantors of the power and strength of our nation ...

If Germany is to experience this political and economic revival and conscientiously fulfill its obligations towards other nations, one decisive step is required: overcoming the Communist subversion of Germany. We, the men of this government, feel ourselves responsible to German history for the reconstruction of an orderly body-politic and thus for finally overcoming the insanity of class and class conflict. It is not a single class that we envision, but rather the German Volk, its millions of peasants, bourgeois, and workers, who will either together overcome the problems of these times or succumb to them together. Full of resolve and true to our oath, we are determined — in view of the present Reichstag's inability to support this work — to entrust this task, to which we are committed, to the German Volk itself.

Reich President Field Marshal von Hindenburg has summoned us with the order to give our nation the opportunity to regain its strength through unity. We therefore now appeal to the German people to take part in this act of reconciliation. The government of the national resurgence wants to work, and it will work: it was not responsible for leading the German nation into ruin for fourteen years, but it wants to lead the nation back to the top. It is determined to make good in four years the damage done in fourteen years. But it cannot make the work of reconstruction dependent upon the approval of those who are to blame for the collapse. The Marxist parties and their fellow travellers have had fourteen years to prove their ability. The result is a heap of rubble. Now, German people, give us four years, and then pass judgment on us! True to the order of the Field Marshal, let us begin. May almighty God look mercifully upon our work, lead our will on the right path, bless us with insight, and reward us with the trust of our people. For we are not fighting for ourselves, but for Germany!

Adolf Hitler; v. Papen; Baron v. Neurath; Dr. Frick;
Count Schwerin v. Krosigk; Dr. Hugenberg; Seldte;
Dr. Gürtner; v. Blomberg; Eitz v. Rübensch; Göring; Dr. Gereke

Source: *Völkischer Beobachter*, 2 February 1933. Translated by Rod Stackelberg

1 Mittelstand is the German designation for the lower middle class of small proprietors, shopkeepers, and tradesmen who, along with small-scale farmers ("peasants"), formed a high proportion of the Nazis' electoral constituency.



29. The Reichstag Fire Decree

On February 27, 1933, the Reichstag building was badly damaged by fire. The cause of the fire remains a mystery even now, but the Nazis blamed the blaze on the Communists and charged that it was a signal for the beginning of a communist revolution. Hitler used the situation to persuade Hindenburg to issue a Decree for the Protection of People and State on February 28. Known as the Reichstag Fire Decree, it established the basis for the creation of a police state by enabling the Nazis to curtail constitutional rights such as freedom of the press and the right to assemble. Armed with this decree, the Nazis rounded up Communists, Social Democrats, and other opponents.

DECREE OF THE REICH PRESIDENT FOR THE PROTECTION OF THE PEOPLE AND STATE OF 28 FEBRUARY 1933

In virtue of Section 48 (2) of the German constitution, the following is decreed as a defensive measure against Communist acts of violence, endangering the state:

ARTICLE 1

Sections 114, 115, 117, 118, 123, 124, and 153 of the Constitution of the German Reich are suspended until further notice. Thus, restrictions on personal liberty, on the right of free expression of opinion, including freedom of the press, on the right of assembly and the right of association, and violations of the privacy of postal, telegraphic, and telephonic communications, and warrants for house-searches, orders for confiscations as well as restrictions on property, are also permissible beyond the legal limits otherwise prescribed.

ARTICLE 2

If in a state the measures necessary for the restoration of public security and order are not taken, the Reich Government may temporarily take over the powers of the highest state authority.

From Office of the United States Chief of Counsel for the Prosecution of Axis Criminality: *Nazi Conspiracy and Aggression* (Washington, D. C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1946), vol. 3, doc. no. 1390-PS, pp. 968-70.

ARTICLE 3

According to orders decreed on the basis of Article 2, by the Reich Government, the authorities of states and provinces [*Gemeindeverbände*], if concerned, have to abide thereby.

ARTICLE 4

Whoever provokes, or appeals for or incites to the disobedience of the orders given out by the supreme state authorities or the authorities subject to them for the execution of this decree, or the orders given by the Reich Government according to Article 2, is punishable — insofar as the deed is not covered by other decrees with more severe punishments — with imprisonment of not less than one month, or with a fine from 150 up to 15,000 Reichsmarks.

Whoever endangers human life by violating Article 1, is to be punished by sentence to a penitentiary, under mitigating circumstances with imprisonment of not less than six months and, when violation causes the death of a person, with death, under mitigating circumstances with a penitentiary sentence of not less than two years. In addition the sentence may include confiscation of property.

Whoever provokes or incites to an act contrary to public welfare is to be punished with a penitentiary sentence, under mitigating circumstances, with imprisonment of not less than three months.

ARTICLE 5

The crimes which under the Criminal Code are punishable with penitentiary for life are to be punished with death: i.e., in Sections 81 (high treason), 229 (poisoning), 306 (arson), 311 (properties), 324 (general poisoning).

Insofar as a more severe punishment has not been previously provided for, the following are punishable with death or with life imprisonment or with imprisonment not to exceed 15 years:

1. Anyone who undertakes to kill the Reich President or a member or a commissioner of the Reich Government or of a state government, or provokes to such a killing, or agrees to commit it, or accepts such an offer, or conspires with another for such a murder;
2. Anyone who under Section 115 (2) of the Criminal Code (serious rioting) or of Section 125 (2) of the Criminal Code (serious disturbance of the peace) commits the act with arms or cooperates consciously and intentionally with an armed person;
3. Anyone who commits a kidnapping under Section 239 of the Criminal Code with the intention of making use of the kidnapped person as a hostage in the political struggle.



Communist revolution, then this is not due to you or people like you, but due to men who recognized and eliminated the danger while you babbled your parlor Bolshevism."

If I am further accused of having the Reichstag fire set to gain a pretext to proceed against the Communists, I must reject this charge as grotesque and ridiculous. To proceed against Communism on special grounds were required. Their record of guilt was already so great, their crimes so immense, that in any case I was determined and ready to begin the ruthless war of extermination against this plague with all means at my disposal. On the contrary, as I already testified at the Reichstag fire trial, the fire, which forced me to act rapidly, was extremely inconvenient to me, as it forced me to act sooner than I had intended and to strike before I had completed all of my necessary preparations. I have no doubt whatsoever that the ideological originator and initiator of the fire was the Communist Party and that there must have been several perpetrators, of whom probably the stupidest and least competent one was captured. But it is not the incendiaries who were the crucial actors here, but rather their ideological progenitors, the ones who secretly pulled the strings: they are the true culprits and destroyers of the German people and their culture.

Source: Hermann Goering, *Aufbau einer Nation* (Berlin: E. S. Mittler & Sohn, 1934), pp. 83-9. Translated by Rod Stackelberg

The "Day of Potsdam"

On 21 March 1933, the first day of spring, the new Hitler government staged an elaborate ceremony in Potsdam, the traditional residence of the Prussian kings. The ceremony was intended to symbolize the continuity between Prusso-German monarchism and the new Nazi-led regime. In the venerable Garrison Church, in front of the vault of Frederick the Great and the thrones traditionally occupied by the kaiser, President Hindenburg called on the new government to overcome the selfishness and partisan divisions of the Weimar era and to lead the national renewal for a unified, free, and proud Germany. Hitler, in turn, extolled Hindenburg as the patron of the German "awakening" and as the symbol of the indestructible vitality of the German nation. In his diary (which was not published until 1959 and may therefore have been subjected to some later revision) the conservative German writer Erich Ebermayer captured the triumphalist mood of the day, but also the foreboding of isolated dissidents.

3.7 Erich Ebermayer, diary entry on the "Day of Potsdam," 21 March 1933

In the morning, broadcast of the ceremony in Potsdam on the radio. Everything is smooth, impressive, even exciting, at least for the masses. But we cannot and must not close our eyes either to what's happening here. Here today the marriage was successful, if not forever, then at least for a while, between the masses led by Hitler and the "spirit of Potsdam," the Prussian tradition represented by Hindenburg.

What magnificent staging by the master director Goebbels! Hindenburg, the cabinet, and members of parliament ride from Berlin to Potsdam through a single, solid line of cheering millions. All of Berlin seems to be in the streets. The cabinet and members of parliament walk from the Nikolai Church to the Garrison Church. Bells pealing and cannons firing.

Hindenburg and Hitler enter the Garrison Church together. The radio announcer is moved almost to tears.

Then Hindenburg reads out his message. Simple, powerful, coming from an unpretentious soul and therefore likely to appeal to unpretentious souls. Merely the fact that here is a man who unites generations of German history, who fought in 1866, who was present at the crowning of the kaiser in 1871 in Versailles, who rose up to become a national hero from 1914 to 1918; whose popularity among our peculiar people was diminished neither by lost battles nor the lost world war; whom, on the contrary, the defeat actually raised to mythical leadership of the empire, not out of vanity or lust for power, but without a doubt out of a Prussian sense of duty — he has achieved now, shortly before his death, the marriage of his world with the newly ascendant world represented by the Austrian corporal Hitler.

Then Hitler speaks. It cannot be denied: he has grown. Surprisingly for his opponents, the demagogue and party leader, the fanatic and rabble-rouser seems to be developing into a real statesman. So he is a genius after all, in whose enigmatic soul there are unsuspected and unprecedented possibilities! The government declaration stands out in its striking moderation. Not a word of hatred against opponents, not a word of racial ideology, no threats directed inside or outside of the country. Hitler only speaks about what they want. Preservation of the great tradition of our nation, stability of the government instead of constant vacillation, taking into consideration all the experiences in the life of the individual and the community that have proven to be useful for the well-being of the people throughout the millennia.

Hindenburg lays wreaths on the graves of the Prussian kings. The aged Field Marshal offers his hand to his corporal from the World War. The corporal bows low over the Field Marshal's hand. Canons thunder over Potsdam — over Germany.

No one can escape the emotion. Father is deeply impressed as well. Mother has tears in her eyes.

I silently leave the room, then the house, and go out into the woods. I must be alone.

In the evening a quiet hour with M. He is completely unmoved by the events of the day, as if enwrapped in a thick protective skin. He thinks it is all merely a rigged act; he does not for a moment waver in his instinctive aversion. "You'll see what will happen!" says the twenty-one year old.

I say nothing, ashamed and distressed.

Source: Erich Ebermayer, *Denn heute gehört uns Deutschland: Persönliches und politisches Tagebuch* (Hamburg and Vienna: Paul Zsolnay Verlag, 1959), pp. 45-7. Translated by Sally Winkle

The Enabling Act

The so-called Enabling Act formed the legal basis of Hitler's dictatorship. The law that abrogated the Weimar constitution and destroyed parliamentary democracy in Germany was given a typically euphemistic title. The necessary two-thirds majority required to change the constitution was achieved by barring elected Communist delegates from taking their seats in the Reichstag and by persuading the Catholic Center Party to support the law. There was some precedent for such a law as both the German People's

Party leader Gustav Stresemann (1878-1929) and his successor as chancellor, the Center Party leader Wilhelm Marx (1863-1946), had succeeded in gaining temporary legislative powers for their cabinets, though in more restricted form, in the Ruhr Crisis in 1923. The Enabling Act gave Hitler dictatorial powers for a period of four years and freed him from dependence not only on the Reichstag but also on the President, whose approval was needed for all legislation passed by decree under Article 48 of the Weimar constitution (Doc. 2.5). The Enabling Act was twice renewed by what had by then become a rubber-stamp Reichstag, and was extended indefinitely by Hitler's decree in 1941.

The Enabling Act passed by a vote of 444 to 94. Only the SPD voted against the law, despite intimidation and threats of retaliation by the Nazis. In negotiations preceding the passage of the law, Hitler made several concessions to gain the support of the Catholic Center, including a pledge to respect the continued existence of the constituent states, the Reichstag, an independent judiciary, and the presidency. Most importantly, Hitler pledged to respect the independence of the Church in Germany. His promise to negotiate a Concordat with the Vatican, a goal of Vatican policy since the 1920s, may have persuaded the Church hierarchy not to oppose the Enabling Act. Hitler's threat to declare a national emergency and rule without legal authorization may also have influenced the Center Party's fateful decision to support the Enabling Act.

3.8 Law to Remove the Distress of People and State, 24 March 1933

The Reichstag has resolved upon the following law which is promulgated herewith with approval of the Reichsrat [the council representing the individual states of the Reich] after it has been established that all the requirements of legislation for changing the constitution have been complied with.

ARTICLE 1

Laws for the Reich can be enacted by the Reich Cabinet as well as in accordance with the procedure provided by the Constitution of the Reich. This applies also to the laws referred to in article 85, paragraph 2, and in article 87 of the Constitution.

ARTICLE 2

The national laws enacted by the Reich Cabinet may deviate from the Constitution insofar as they do not affect the instruction of the Reichsrat or the Reichsrat as such. The powers of the Reich President will remain intact.

ARTICLE 3

The laws for the Reich enacted by the Reich Cabinet are issued by the Reich Chancellor and published in the *Reichsgesetzblatt*. They come into effect, unless otherwise specified, on the day following their publication. Articles 68 to 77 of the Constitution do not apply to the laws enacted by the Reich Cabinet.

ARTICLE 4

Treaties of the Reich with foreign countries relating to matters of national legislation do not require the approval of the bodies participating in the legislation. The Reich Cabinet is empowered to issue the necessary provisions for the execution of these treaties.

ARTICLE 5

This law will become effective on the day of its promulgation. It becomes invalid on 1 April 1937. Moreover it becomes invalid if the present Reich government should be replaced by another. Berlin, 24 March 1933

The Reich President: von Hindenburg
The Reich Chancellor: Adolf Hitler

The Reich Minister of the Interior: Frick

The Reich Minister of Foreign Affairs: Freiherr von Neurath

The Reich Minister of Finance: Count Schwerin von Krosigk

Source: *Reichsgesetzblatt*, 1933, I, p. 141

Persecution of the Jews

The widespread random attacks on Jews by SA and Nazi party members that accompanied the Nazi assumption of power resulted in adverse publicity, criticism by foreign governments, and efforts to organize boycotts of German imports to Britain, the US, and other countries. Under the pretext of punishing Jews for "arbitrary propaganda," but in reality to provide a controlled outlet for party militants who wanted to force Jews out of Germany through violent action, the Nazi leadership called a one-day boycott of all Jewish enterprises on 1 April 1933. The SA was under orders not to enter the premises of Jewish businesses, however, or to destroy property. The direction of this action was entrusted to a "Committee for the Defense Against Jewish Arrogance and Boycott Propaganda" under the leadership of Julius Streicher (1885-1946), Gauleiter of Franconia and publisher of the anti-Semitic tabloid *Der Stürmer*. Streicher's public proclamation of the boycott held German Jews accountable for any boycott activity ahead. For a number of reasons the official boycott lasted only one day. The Nazis feared the chaotic consequences that might result from a sudden extrusion of Jews from German economic life. Industrial leaders also feared foreign retaliation against German exports. Public compliance with the boycott was sporadic at best. Unofficially, however, boycotts continued on the local level, and SA and party members were prohibited from patronizing Jewish businesses.

3.9 Julius Streicher, Appeal for the boycott of all Jewish enterprises,

31 March 1933

German national comrades! The ones who are guilty of this insane crime, this malicious atrocity propaganda and incitement to boycott, are the Jews in Germany. They have called on their racial

creative culmination of work already begun. The statesman is there to create standards; the state and the people are his only concerns. The state is the sole power and the last guarantor of something to which every citizen can lay claim: iron-clad justice. Therefore the state also cannot endure any dualism in the long term, and the success of the German Revolution and the future of our nation depend on whether a satisfactory solution can be found to the dualism between party and state.

The Government is well informed on all the self-interest, lack of character, want of truth, unchivalrous conduct, and arrogance trying to rear its head under cover of the German Revolution. It is also not deceived about the fact that the rich store of confidence bestowed upon it by the German people is threatened. If one wishes a close proximity to and a close connection with the people, one must not underestimate the good sense of the people; one must return their confidence and not contemptuously want to tell them what to do. The German people know that their situation is serious; they feel the economic distress; they are perfectly aware of the defects of many laws conditioned by the emergency; they have a discerning feeling for violence and injustice; they smile at clumsy attempts to deceive them with false optimism. No organization and no propaganda, no matter how good, will in the long run be able to retain trust. I have therefore viewed the wave of propaganda against the so-called petty critics differently from many others. Confidence and readiness to cooperate cannot be won by incitement, especially of youth, nor by threats against helpless segments of the people, but only by discussion with the people with trust on both sides. The people know that great sacrifices are expected from them. They will bear them and follow the Führer with unwavering loyalty, if they are allowed to have their part in the planning and in the work, if every word of criticism is not taken for ill will, and if despairing patriots are not branded as enemies of the state. . . .

Source: *Trial of the Major War Criminals Before the International Military Tribunal*, Vol. XV (International Military Tribunal, 1949), pp. 544-557

Retroactive legalization of the Roehm Purge

In the night of 30 June 1934 Hitler authorized the SS (aided in some areas by regular army units) to liquidate the SA leadership. He was encouraged to do so by Himmler, Goering, and Goebbels, as well as the Reichswehr leadership, all of whom viewed Roehm as a dangerous rival. The Nazi leaders took the opportunity to liquidate others who had opposed or criticized Hitler in the past, including Gregor Strasser, General Kurt von Schleicher, Gustav von Kahr, and the Catholic publicist Erich Klausener. Papen escaped with his life, but the author of his Marburg speech, Edgar Jung, was shot (see Doc. 3.20). The exact number of victims has never been determined; they may have numbered in the hundreds. Hitler justified the purge as a necessary defense against a planned SA putsch, despite the fact that virtually the entire SA leadership was on furlough at the time. Nonetheless, wide sectors of the public approved of Hitler's actions, and President Hindenburg sent him a congratulatory telegram. The Ministry of Justice retroactively legalized the summary executions in the following decree.

3.21 Law Relating to National Emergency Defense Measures, 3 July 1934

The Reich Government has enacted the following law, which is hereby promulgated:

The measures taken on 30 June and 1 and 2 July 1934 to suppress attempts at treason and high treason are legal emergency measures in defense of the state.

Berlin, 3 July 1934

The Reich Chancellor: Adolf Hitler
The Reich Minister of the Interior: Frick
The Reich Minister of Justice: Dr. Gürtner
Source: *Reichsgesetzblatt*, 1934, 1, p. 529

Loyalty oath of the armed forces to Hitler

This loyalty oath was initiated by leaders of the Reichswehr after Hitler combined the offices of President and Chancellor in his person following Hindenburg's death on 2 August 1934. In a reversion to a practice typical of absolutist monarchies of the past, officers and soldiers pledged loyalty to the Führer personally, not to the offices of president or chancellor as prescribed in the constitution. By introducing this oath army leaders expressed their appreciation to Hitler for his suppression of the SA as a potential rival to the military. The loyalty oath also reflected the common interest of the Reichswehr and the Nazi Party in the speedy introduction of universal military training and accelerated rearmament. Reichswehr leaders were well aware that they depended on the Nazi government and on Hitler's leadership and diplomacy to achieve these goals.

3.22 Oath of officials and soldiers of the Wehrmacht, 20 August 1934

The Reich Government has enacted the following law, which is hereby proclaimed:

ARTICLE I

Civilian officials and soldiers of the Armed Forces must take an oath of service on entering the service.

ARTICLE 2

- 1 The oath of service of civilian officials will be:
I swear I shall be loyal and obedient to Adolf Hitler, the Führer of the German Reich and people; respect the laws; and fulfill my official duties conscientiously, so help me God.
- 2 The oath of service of the soldiers of the Armed Forces will be:

I swear by God this sacred oath, that I will render unconditional obedience to Adolf Hitler, the Führer of the German Reich and people, supreme commander of the Armed Forces, and will be ready as a brave soldier to risk my life at any time for this oath. . . .

Berlin, 20 August 1934

The Führer and Reich Chancellor: Adolf Hitler

The Reich Minister of the Interior: Frick

The Reich Minister of Defense: von Blomberg

Source: *Reichsgesetzblatt*, 1934, I, p. 785

Paul von Hindenburg, Political Testament

President Hindenburg's testament was published in the official National Socialist newspaper, *Völkischer Beobachter*, on 16 August 1934, two weeks after the popular war hero's death at the age of 86. His testament is noteworthy because it reflects the goodwill of the old elites toward the Third Reich and their approval of its accomplishments and what they took to be its direction and its aims. Although Hindenburg was a monarchist who hoped for the eventual restoration of the Hohenzollern dynasty, he, too, believed in Germany's "world mission," the necessity of rearmament, and the reversal of Germany's defeat in the First World War. Particularly interesting is his apology for the role that he played as the president of the Weimar Republic in upholding a form of government he abhorred. This strategy was necessary, he wrote, to preserve German independence while Germany was still too weak to resist the threat of foreign intervention. He viewed Hitler's accession to power as the event that had unified Germany and would enable the nation to finally throw off the fetters of foreign oppression and reclaim its rightful place in the world. He ends by exhorting his countrymen to continue to participate in the national reconstruction initiated by the Nazis.

3.23 Hindenburg's Political Testament, August 1934

To the German nation and its Chancellor, my testament.

In 1919 I wrote in my message to the German nation: "We were at the end! Just like Siegfried under the burning spear of the furious Hagen, our exhausted front collapsed. In vain we tried to drink new life from the perennial spring of inborn strength. It was our task now to save the remaining strength of our army for the coming reconstruction of the Fatherland. The present was lost. There remained now only hope—for the future!"

"I understand the idea of escape from the world which obsessed many officers, in view of the collapse of all that was dear and true to them. The desire to know nothing more of a world where seething passions obscured the vital qualities of our nation, so that they could no longer be recognized, is humanly conceivable. And yet—but I must express it frankly, just as I think! Comrades of the once grand, proud German army! Can you speak of losing heart? Think of the men who more than a hundred years ago created for us a new Fatherland. Their

religion was their faith in themselves and in the sanctity of their cause. They created the new Fatherland, basing it not on freak doctrine theories foreign to our nature, but building it up on the foundations of the free development of the framework and the principles of our own common weal! When it is able, Germany will take this path again.

"I have the firm conviction that now, as in those times, the links with our great rich past will be preserved, and, where they have been broken, will be restored. The old Germany spirit will again assert itself triumphantly, though only after it has been purged in the flames of suffering and passion. "Our enemies knew the strength of this spirit; they admired and hated it in times of peace; they were astonished at it and feared it on the battlefields of the Great War. They sought to explain our strength to their peoples by using the empty word 'organization.' They were silent about the spirit that lived and moved behind the veil of this word. But in and with this spirit we will again courageously reconstruct our nation.

"Germany, the focus-point of so many of the inexhaustible values of human civilization and culture, will not go under so long as it retains faith in its historical world mission. I am confident that the depth and strength of thought of the best in our fatherland will succeed in blending new ideas with the precious treasures of former times, and from them will together forge lasting values for the welfare of our fatherland.

"This is the unmistakable conviction with which I leave the bloody battlefield of international warfare. I have seen the heroic agony of my fatherland and never, never will I believe that it was its death agony.

"For the present our entire former constellation lies buried under the flood-tide raised by the storm of wild political passions and resounding phrases which has apparently destroyed all sacred traditions. But this flood-tide will subside. Then, from the eternally agitated sea of human life, will again emerge that rock to which the hope of our fathers clung, that rock upon which, nearly half a century ago, the future of our fatherland was, by our strength, confidently founded—the German Empire! When the national idea, the national consciousness, has again been raised, then, out of the Great War—on which no nation can look back with such legitimate pride and with such clear conscience as we—as well as out of the bitter severity of the present days, precious moral fruits will ripen for us. The blood of all those who have fallen in the faith of the greatness of the fatherland will not then have flowed in vain. In this assurance I lay down my pen and rely firmly on you—the youth of Germany."

I wrote these words in the darkest hours and in the conviction that I was fast approaching the close of a life spent in the service of the fatherland. Fate disposed otherwise for me. In the spring of 1925 a new chapter of my life was opened. Again I was wanted to cooperate in the destiny of my nation. Only my firm confidence in Germany's inexhaustible resources gave me the courage to accept the office of Reichspräsident. This firm belief lent me also the moral strength to fulfill unwaveringly the duties of that difficult position.

The last chapter of my life has been for me, at the same time, the most difficult. Many have not understood me in these troubled times and have not comprehended that my only anxiety was to lead the distracted and discouraged German nation back to self-conscious unity.

I began and conducted the duties of my office in the consciousness that a preparatory period of complete renunciation was necessary in domestic and international politics. From the Easter message of the year 1925—in which I exhorted the nation to the fear of God, to social justice, to internal peace and political sanity—onwards, I have not become tired of cultivating the inward unity of our nation and the self-consciousness of its best qualities. Moreover, I was conscious that the political constitution and form of government which