

Georg von Schnitzler on Hitler's Appeal to Leading German Industrialists on February 20, 1933 (November 10, 1945)

Abstract

Hitler did not intend to share his power with coalition partners. After the dissolution of the Reichstag, he hoped to win an absolute majority for the NSDAP with a massive election campaign. To finance the electoral battle, he sought support from Germany's leading industrialists. In a meeting held on February 20, 1933, Hitler and Hermann Göring (1893–1946) explained the benefits that industry leaders would derive from an NSDAP victory: political stability, the complete elimination of the Communist threat and, not least, a lucrative rearmament policy.

Among those present at the meeting was George von Schnitzler, a board member of I.G. Farben, then the world's largest chemical conglomerate. (I.G. Farben would eventually go on to produce the Zyklon B gas used in Nazi death camps). In the following affidavit, which Schnitzler himself delivered in broken English on November 10, 1945, he describes the purpose of the meeting and provides the names of others in attendance that day.

Schnitzler, who in his later capacity as chairman of the company's Chemical Committee [*Chemikalienausschuss*] was responsible for exploiting the Polish and French chemical industries, was sentenced to a five-year prison term at the I.G. Farben Trial of 1947–48. He was released after one year, however.

Source

Affidavit of Georg von Schnitzler

I, Georg von Schnitzler, a member of the *Vorstand* of I.G. Farben, make the following deposition under oath:

At the end of February 1933, 4 members of the *Vorstand* [managerial board] of I.G. Farben including Dr. Bosch, the head of the *Vorstand*, and myself were asked by the office of the president of the Reichstag to attend a meeting in his house. The purpose of which was not given. I do not remember the two other colleagues of mine who were also invited. I believe the invitation reached me during one of my business trips to Berlin. I went to the meeting which was attended by about 20 persons who I believe were mostly leading industrialists from the Ruhr.

Among those present I remember:

Dr. Schacht, who at that time was not yet head of the Reichsbank again and not yet Minister of Economics.

Krupp von Bohlen, who in the beginning of 1933 presided [over] the Reichsverband der Deutschen Industrie [Reich Association of German Industry], which later on was changed in[to] the semi-official organization Reichsgruppe Industrie [Reich Industry Group].

Dr. Albert Vogler, the leading man of the Vereinigte Stahlwerke [United Steelworks].

von Lowenfeld from an industrial works in Essen.

Dr. Stein, head of the Gewerkschaft Auguste Victoria, a mine which belongs to the I.G. Dr. Stein was an active member of the Deutsche Volkspartei [German People's Party].

I remember that Dr. Schacht acted as a kind of host.

While I had expected the appearance of Göring, Hitler entered the room, shook hands with everybody and took a seat at the top of the table. In a long speech he talked mainly about the danger of communism over which he pretended that he had just won a decisive victory.

He then talked about the "Bundnis" [alliance] into which his party and the Deutsch-Nationale Volkspartei had entered. This latter party in the meantime had been reorganized by Herr von Papen. On the end [sic] he came to the point which seemed to me the purpose of the meeting. Hitler stressed the importance that the two aforementioned parties should gain the majority in the coming Reichstag election. Krupp von Bohlen thanked Hitler for his speech. After Hitler had left the room, Dr. Schacht proposed to the meeting the raising of an election fund of—as far as I remember—RM 3,000,000. The fund should be distributed between the two "Allies" [alliance partners] according to their relative strength at the time being. Dr. Stein suggested that the Deutsche Volkspartei should be included which suggestion when I rightly remember was accepted. The amounts which the individual firms had to contribute were not discussed.

I did not take part in the discussion but reported the matter the next day or the overnext [sic] to Dr. Bosch in Frankfurt who together with Geh. Rat Schmitz had reserved exclusively for themselves the handling of distribution of money to political parties, the press etc. and had made a special appoint of "Vertraulichkeit" (secrecy) in this respect.

Dr. Bosch did, as far as I remember, not make any remark to my report, but shrugged his shoulders.

I never heard again of the whole matter but I believe that either the buro of Göring or Schacht or the Reichsverband der deutschen Industrie had asked the office of Bosch or Schmitz for payment of I.G.'s share in the election fund. As I did not take the matter up again I not even at that time knew whether and which amount had been paid by the I.G. According to the volume of the I.G. I should estimate I.G.'s share being something like 10% of the election fund, but as far as I know there is no evidence that I.G. Farben participated in the payments.

I understand the English language.

G. von Schnitzler

Source: Georg von Schnitzler on Hitler's Appeal to Leading German Industrialists on February 20, 1933 (Affidavit, November 10, 1945). In United States Chief Counsel for the Prosecution of Axis Criminality, *Nazi Conspiracy and Aggression*, Volume VII. Washington, DC: United States Government Printing Office, 1946, Document 439-EC [Affidavit of Georg von Schnitzler, Member of the Board of Directors of I.G. Farben, 10. November 1945, Regarding a Meeting of Industrialists with Hitler in February 1933, at which Schacht Proposed the Raising of an Election Fund (Exhibit USA-618)], pp. 501-02. Available online at: https://www.loc.gov/item/2011525363_NT_Nazi_Vol-VII/

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