

# Banker Kurt Baron von Schröder's Report on a Meeting between Hitler and Franz von Papen at Schroeder's House in Cologne on January 4, 1933 (Retrospective Account from the Postwar Period)

## Abstract

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Franz von Papen had Reichswehr Minister Kurt von Schleicher to thank for his chancellorship. At first, Schleicher used his position as a gray eminence to operate in a background role. But when Papen was ready to risk civil war-like conditions in order to implement his program, and when he began overstepping boundaries in the pursuit of his own agenda, Schleicher refused to take what appeared to be the necessary step of imposing martial law. Schleicher then sought the chancellorship himself, and on November 17, 1932, Papen had to resign his position. Papen, until then a personal friend of Schleicher, regarded his successor with bitter animosity. In December 1932, banker and Nazi sympathizer Kurt von Schröder organized a meeting between Papen and Adolf Hitler on January 4, 1933, in Cologne. Papen, who got on exceedingly well with Reich President Paul von Hindenburg, wanted to displace Schleicher under all circumstances, and he aimed to regain the chancellorship himself with the help of the NSDAP as a coalition partner. Hitler, for his part, desperately needed to score a political victory, as there were signs that the Nazi Party and the SA were in danger of dissolving, and the party's lack of participation in the government was a source of increasing frustration. The meeting between Papen and Hitler in Cologne didn't yield any concrete results, but it did mark the beginning of a relationship that would lead to Hitler's appointment as Reich Chancellor on January 30, 1933.

## Source

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On 4 January 1933 Hitler, von Papen, Hess, Himmler and Keppler arrived at my house in Cologne. Hitler, von Papen and I went into my study where a two-hour discussion took place. Hess, Himmler and Keppler did not take part but were in the adjoining room. [...] The negotiations took place exclusively between Hitler and Papen. [...] Papen went on to say that he thought it best to form a government in which the conservative and nationalist elements that had supported him were represented together with the Nazis. He suggested that this new government should, if possible, be led by Hitler and himself together. Then Hitler made a long speech in which he said that, if he were to be elected Chancellor, Papen's followers could participate in his (Hitler's) Government as Ministers if they were willing to support his policy which was planning many alterations in the existing state of affairs. He outlined these alterations, including the removal of all Social Democrats, Communists and Jews from leading positions in Germany and the restoration of order in public life. Von Papen and Hitler reached agreement in principle whereby many of the disagreements between them could be removed and cooperation might be possible. It was agreed that further details could be worked out later either in Berlin or some other suitable place. This happened, as I learned later, at a meeting with Ribbentrop. [...]

This meeting between Hitler and Papen on 4 January 1933 in my house in Cologne was arranged by me after Papen had asked me for it on about 10 December 1932. Before I took this step I talked to a number of businessmen and informed myself generally on how the business world viewed a collaboration between the two men. The general desire of businessmen was to see a strong man come to power in Germany who would form a government that would stay in power for a long time. [...]

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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. 115-16.

Source of original German text: No. 96, "Eidesstattliche Erklärung des Freiherrn Kurt von Schroeder vor der amerikanischen Untersuchungsbehörde des Internationalen Militärgerichtshofes in Nürnberg zu den Verhandlungen in seinem Hause in Köln mit Hitler am 4. Januar 1933" ["Sworn Statement by Kurt Baron von Schroeder to the American Investigatory Committee of the International Military Tribunal in Nuremberg on the Negotiations with Hitler at Schroeder's House in Cologne on January 4, 1933"], reprinted in Reinhard Kühnl, *Der deutsche Faschismus in Quellen und Dokumenten*. Düsseldorf: Paul-Rugenstein Verlag, 1977, pp. 172-75.

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