

Excerpts from the Reichstag Debate on the National Budget (February 5, 1931)

Abstract

This recording preserves some of the parliamentary speeches and debates that took place in the Reichstag on February 5, 1931, as its members grappled with consequences of the global economic depression. We hear Chancellor Heinrich Brüning (Zentrum) speak first in this clip, as he called for drastic austerity measures and for an “Ermächtigungsgesetz” [Enabling law] to allow the government to impose those measures without having to perform the tricky feat of securing a majority of Reichstag members. Near the end of his speech, Brüning talked about a plan to help the languishing agricultural sector, particularly in the eastern regions of the country, and about his insistence that Germany simply cease its reparations payments to the western Allies. The recording also clearly captured the boisterous atmosphere of many Reichstag debates, with particularly boisterous heckling coming, in this particular case, from the KPD and NSDAP members. Brüning had held the office of chancellor for nearly a year by this point, having assumed his duties at the end of March 1930. An economist by training, Brüning saw budget cuts and deflation as the keys to getting the economy back on track, but in order to pass these incredibly unpopular initiatives without a parliamentary majority behind him, he had to make use of emergency decrees, issued by President Hindenburg.

Later in the clip, we hear Joseph Goebbels’s sharp criticism of Brüning’s policies, accompanied by cheers from the NSDAP faction, which held the second-largest number of seats in the Reichstag at the time. Goebbels blamed Brüning, in particular, for the worsening unemployment and ever more precarious position of the working classes. Despite his contempt for parliamentary democracy, Goebbels had represented the NSDAP in the Reichstag since May 1928, where he and the other Nazi members made zealous use of the parliamentary soapbox to launch their broadsides against the government and the republic as a whole. The Reichstag began to allow the recording of speeches and debates in the middle of the 1920s, but the early technology could only record and preserve brief passages. By 1930, however, the technology had evolved enough to save longer segments, such as the ones here, even if still not always speeches in their entirety.

Source

For a transcript of this recording, please visit
https://www.reichstagsprotokolle.de/Blatt2_w5_bsb00000128_00688.html

Source: SWR 2 Archivradio,
<https://www.swr.de/swrkultur/wissen/archivradio/haushalt-des-deutschen-reichs-wird-verhandelt-1931-reichstag-vor-hitler-100.html>

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