

5. Extracts from Hindenburg's Testament

11 MAY 1934

(...)

A new chapter of my life was opened in the spring of 1925. Once again I was to cooperate in the destiny of my people. It was only my firm confidence in the inexhaustible resources of Germany that gave me the courage to agree to my first and second elections to the Reich Presidency.

This firm belief also gave me the inner strength unswervingly to carry out my difficult office. The last part of my life has also been the most difficult for me. Many have failed to understand me in these confused times and have failed to grasp the fact that my only care has been to restore the disunited and discouraged German people to a self-conscious unity.

When I shall have returned to my comrades above, with whom I fought on so many battlefields for the greatness and honor of our nation, I shall then call out to the younger generation:

“Prove yourselves worthy of your ancestors. Never forget that, if you want to secure the peace and welfare of your homeland, it is necessary that you be prepared to sacrifice your all for this peace and honor of your country. Never forget that your deeds, too, will become tradition at some future time.”

The Field Marshal of the World War and your later Supreme Commander gives his thanks to all the men who have built up and extended the Reichswehr.

In their foreign politics the German people have had to travel the road to Calvary. A frightful treaty has weighed heavily upon us and has threatened, in its ever-increasing consequences, to bring our nation to a point of collapse. For a long time the world around us has failed to understand that Germany must live, not only for her own sake, but also, as the standard bearer of Western civilization, for the sake of Europe.

The shackles that surrounded us could only be loosened step by step, without arousing an overwhelming resistance. If some of my comrades of the old days failed at the time to grasp the inevitability of this method, then history will judge more justly how bitter, but also how necessary, many a state document signed by me was, for the welfare of Germany. In harmony with the growing internal recovery and strengthening of the German people, it was possible, on the basis of its own national dignity and honor, to strive for, and eventually achieve, a progressive and God willing a blessed collaboration on the problems facing all Europe.

I thank Providence for allowing me, in the evening of my life, to be a witness to the hour of recuperation. I thank all those who, with selfless patriotism, have collaborated in the reconstruction of Germany.

My Chancellor, Adolf Hitler, and his movement have made a decisive step toward the great goal of bringing the German people together to an inner unity above all differences of rank and class. I know that much remains to be done, and I desire with all my heart that, behind the act of national resurgence and popular cooperation, there should be an act of conciliation which embraces the entire German Fatherland.

I say farewell to my German people in the full hope that that for which I longed in 1919 and which by slow fruition led to January 30, 1933, may mature to the complete fulfilment and realization of the historic mission of our people.

In this firm faith in the future of the Fatherland I am content to close my eyes in peace!

VON HINDENBURG
