

MY PERSONAL AND FINANCIAL RELATIONS WITH THE NAZI PARTY

from *I Paid Hitler* by FRITZ THYSSEN, translated by César Saerchinger

I DID NOT become a member of the National Socialist Party until December 1931. This was after my collaboration in a great mass meeting in Harzburg, at which Alfred Hugenberg, as leader of the German National People's Party, and Hitler, as leader of the German National Socialist Labor Party, announced the co-operation of the two parties. The German National People's Party was the heir of the old Imperial Conservative Party. The German National Socialist Labor Party is, of course, the official title of the National Socialists, commonly known as Nazis. That this partnership in principle did not become a real union, which might long have survived the appointment of Hitler as chancellor of the Reich, was probably due more to Hugenberg than to Hitler. I personally had worked zealously for the German Nationals, but finally had fallen out with their leader. Even while I was a member of the German National Party, the National Socialists were congenial to me. I considered them to be sensible and rational.

As I have already mentioned, I came to know Adolf Hitler in Munich, when I was still a member of the German National Party. I did not enter into closer relationship with him until sometime later on, and even then we never became very intimate.

Rudolf Hess was instrumental in bringing about a closer personal association between the Nazis and myself. He came to me sometime during 1928, on the initiative of old Geheimrat Kirdorf, for many years the director general of the Rhenish-Westphalian Coal Syndicate, with whom I was on friendly terms. Hess explained to me that the Nazis had bought the Brown House in Munich and had great difficulty in paying for it. I placed Hess in possession of the required funds on conditions which, however, he has never fulfilled. For by no means did I want to make the Nazis a present; I merely arranged a foreign loan for the National Socialist Party through the banks. At that time Hess received the money, which he was obligated to pay back. But he returned only a small part of it; for the rest I myself simply had to 'acknowledge receipt.'

Geheimrat Kirdorf had been a member of the National-Socialist Party long before me. His importance in Germany had always been rather exaggerated. Even the creation of the Coal Syndicate, which made his name known far beyond the borders of Germany, is not to be credited to him alone, but jointly to him and his colleague, Unkel. But Kirdorf was its first president, and he always assumed a very domineering manner *vis-à-vis* the outside world. As far back as the time when Kaiser William II brought out his first social welfare laws, Kirdorf was aroused to violent opposition to the emperor. For at bottom he was a reactionary, although he was by no means unkind. He simply had the bad habit of making a quick decision whenever he was in anger. During his famous quarrel with the Kaiser he named the little castle in which he lived the 'Battle Yard.'