

But I did in fact bring about the connection between Hitler and the entire body of Rhenish-Westphalian industrialists. It is common knowledge that on January 27th, 1932--almost a year before he seized power--Adolf Hitler made a speech lasting about two and a half hours before the Industry Club of Düsseldorf. The speech made a deep impression on the assembled industrialists, and in consequence of this a number of large contributions flowed from the resources of heavy industry into the treasuries of the National Socialist Party.

The preliminaries to this 'historic' speech are worth noting. It was not my original intention to let Hitler speak to this gathering. In fact, no provision had been made for the delivery of a National Socialist address. On the contrary, the committee of the Industry Club had given permission to a Social Democrat to make a speech, with the result that the members became greatly excited, and many threatened to resign. At a very stormy session of the committee I said there was only one way of making good this mistake, and that was to invite a National Socialist to address the assembly as well. The proposal was adopted.

However, in making it I had certainly not immediately thought of Adolf Hitler, but rather of Gregor Strasser, as the man to make the speech. For Strasser was in those days the most popular figure among the National Socialist representatives in the Rhineland. He was an educated man, a pharmacist by profession; and generally people took him seriously, despite his National Socialist leanings. That was because one could argue with Strasser, and because he made not nearly so disagreeable an impression as, for instance, Dr. Robert Ley, who at that time published a paper in Cologne and who is today the head of the German Labor Front. So I asked Gregor Strasser to make the speech at the Düsseldorf Club. But shortly after this I accidentally met Adolf Hitler in Berlin. When I mentioned to him the projected address before the Düsseldorf Industry Club he said, 'I think it would be better if I came myself.' I duly agreed; and it was actually through this invitation that Hitler first became properly known in the Rhineland and in Westphalia. So far as I was concerned the origin of the invitation had no political significance. But Hitler, no doubt, immediately saw the political value of the opportunity which was thus offered to him.

I have personally given altogether one million marks to the National Socialist Party.

Not more. My contributions have been very much overestimated, because I have always been rated the richest man in Germany. But after all, what does it mean to own factories? It does not follow that a man has a lot of cash to spare. In any case, Hitler had other sources of money besides me. In Munich, for instance, there was Herr Bruckmann, the well-known printer; and in Berlin there was Carl Bechstein, the world-renowned piano manufacturer, who also contributed large sums. Aside from this, Hitler did not receive many subsidies from individual industrialists.

It was during the last years preceding the Nazi seizure of power that the big industrial corporations began to make their contributions. But they did not give directly to Hitler; they gave it to Dr. Alfred Hugenberg, who placed about one-fifth of the donated amounts at the disposal of the National Socialist Party. All in all, the amounts given by heavy