

Reconstruction

of the last will of Reich president F.M. von Hindenburg.

(drafted by me personally in April, 1934 and accepted by the Reich President in May, 1934. The wording is not identical but the thoughts and desires of the Reich President are authentic).

Text :

Berlin..... May, 1934

To the Chancellor of the Reich, A. Hitler, Berlin.

My Last Will

In my advanced age, God may soon call me away from this life. Therefore, I wish to proclaim hereby to you and the German people to whom the services of all my life were dedicated, my conception and my wishes for the future of the people and the state.

In one of the gravest hours in the German people's innerpolitical life, I have called you, Mr. Chancellor of the Reich, to be the head of the government of the Reich, The German people torn apart into many parties and split and shattered by social struggles, which were aggravated by unemployment on an unheard-of scale.

You have built up a movement which represents a big social program and which desires to re-establish the full sovereignty of the German Reich in matters of foreign policy and to clear it from the unjust blame of being the only one guilty for the world war.

In approval of this program, to be carried out by peaceful means, I have entrusted to you the leadership of the government.

It gives me great happiness to see that the lost sense of national unity is growing again, that the German worker considers himself again a valuable and important part of the German people, that class-hatred is vanishing and that peasants, businessmen and scientists today are again marching hand in hand.

A large program of work procurement again secures work and the daily bread for the major part of our people.

All this represents a big step forward. For, if Germany is to re-occupy her once so respected place in the council of European nations, her inner balance must first be re-established by unity, law and order.

The more orderly and just the manner in which a state is governed and administered, the greater the respect and the confidence it enjoys in the life of nations; the sooner also will it find readiness to be accorded the rights to which a sovereign state is inalienably entitled and which it has the duty to demand by peaceful means.

Although it is true that in extraordinary times the use of extraordinary methods by a government is indicated and permitted, the experience of a long life, ripened in long and hard discipline, taught me that it is necessary to return as early as possible to normal conditions under which the powers of the state can be controlled by parliament and independent agencies.

Advantageous as it may seem for the moment to replace the many parties of the country by one big single movement, it is nevertheless necessary that the government, be it even inspired by the best intentions should not suppress an opposition which constitutes a control that is valuable and indispensable for the government itself.

I have especially at heart the education of German youth which had to suffer so much from the scourge of unemployment.

It is the (standard) bearer of German future. Its admission to Labor Service and Education is a gratifying progress. But it is also necessary above all not to let degenerate the spiritual basis upon which all education rests.

The rich history of our fatherland was based for more than a thousand years on the strong foundation of the Christian conception.

It is the foremost duty of any government to keep this foundation unshaken.

Measures against both the servants and the institutions of the Christian churches -- may they have appeared necessary for political or moral reasons -- must never shake the Christian heritage on which rests the occidental civilization and the historic mission of Germany.

When God decides to call me from this life, the question of the head of the Reich will have to be settled anew. A faithful servant of my Emperor and King throughout my long life, I have always been a staunch supporter of the monarchical system of government. History teaches us that the Reich and Prussia, as well as the other states, owe their rulers immeasurably much. Therefore it concerned me deeply that, as a result of the lost war, the monarchical form of government was replaced by the republican form. Despite these scruples, I have not hesitated to serve the German people under this form of government when called upon to do so.

Yet, experience showed me that our nation -- politically still weaker than other old democracies -- without a strong, authoritative and steady leadership becomes too easily a pawn of its parties and exploiters. The election of a head of state and the formation of governments often were the source of great disturbances and shameful strife.

It would also violate sound policies of state to combine the offices of the head of the Reich and the head of the government in one person. The legislative and the executive branch must always remain separated.

Therefore it is my wish that Germany return to the monarchical form of government after my death.

The House of Hohenzollern has a legitimate claim which has been fortified by centuries of glorious history, and I am convinced that a descendant of that house will do all to secure peace, happiness and prosperity for the German people in the future.

I say farewell to the German people with the feeling of deep gratitude for the confidence which it has placed in me, as a soldier in the field and as the Reich president. My life and my thoughts belong to Germany only. I pray that God may give the Fatherland which has been hit hard by the war a new future in peace and in prosperity and in brotherly unity of the whole German people.

(Signed) von Hindenburg.

Nurnberg, October 24, 1945  
(Signed) von Papen.

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