

Background: This is Goebbels' Christmas Eve speech in 1941, delivered over the radio. He has little to say about the war itself. Instead, he persuades Germans of their greatness, and of the certainty of victory.

The source: "Weihnacht 1941. Rundfunkrede an das deutsche Volk zum Heiligenabend.," *Das eherne Herz* (Munich: Zentralverlag der NSDAP., 1943), pp. 138-144.

Christmas, 1941

by Joseph Goebbels

As I speak on Christmas Eve over the radio to the German people, I am the spokesman for the homeland to all our soldiers who are far from home during this war Christmas of 1941. I know that countless people envy my ability to speak over the aether to millions of Germans in many lands and continents. How many men and women, fathers, sons and daughters, wish they could stand in my place and greet their sons, husbands, brothers, or fathers! How many soldiers and Germans abroad wish they could step to the microphone and speak to their mothers, fathers, children, or brothers and sisters.

I must today speak for them all. I must extend the greetings and deepest wishes from here to there and from there to here. I will say little of politics this evening. We all know what we Germans have to say about world conditions and the future. Everyone knows that we must withstand the storms of the age until victory is ours. That has become clear in recent years, and I do not need to say anything about it.

Instead, I want to talk of the thoughts and feelings that move all of us this Christmas Eve. I will speak for half an hour as one person to another. We will consider the difficulties of the century in which we stand, and look both backwards and forwards.

There are few presents under the Christmas tree this year. The effects of the war are evident there as well. We have sent our Christmas candles to the Eastern Front, where our soldiers need them more than we do. Rather than producing dolls, castles, lead soldiers, and toy guns, our factories have been producing things essential for the war effort. Our troops are the first priority.

But gifts are not the most important thing about Christmas anyway. Since we can no longer celebrate Christmas as generously and wastefully as in the past, perhaps we will remember even more its spiritual nature. Instead of giving outward gifts to our family, friends, and community, today we will express our love to one another and our faith in all that holds us together. We long for a golden bridge to extend to all those whom we love across the distant reaches, countries, oceans, and continents.

All eyes look to the homeland. Our soldiers and Germans abroad above all have learned how beautiful it is in the past year. That may be why they have fought so bravely and loyally for it. They wanted to protect it from the horrors of war. All that they left behind when they heeded duty's call they hope to find upon their return just as it was when they left. The war has become a school that has increased the love all of us have for the homeland. Whatever the difficulties of today or tomorrow, the individual finds there the meaning of his devotion, his sacrifice, his bravery. In this third war Christmas, we celebrate more spartanly and more modestly than before, but we are protected and guarded against the threats of our enemies. We must thank those who defend us, our sons, fathers, and brothers, who have learned only in distant lands among foreign peoples how dear their fatherland and their people are.

The great task demands the same sacrifice from us! The hardest demands are on our soldiers. They are spending their third Christmas away. The homeland is the center about which all their thoughts and

wishes circle. Their greatest pride must be that they are defending the homeland and protecting it from the fury of war. They have learned the terrors of modern warfare, with which they are daily surrounded. It is surely worth their great and brave exertions to see to it that their village and their Fatherland do not meet the same fate as countless villages and cities in enemy countries. Think of what would have become of their parents, their wives and their children if they had not defended the homeland! Each German soldier should remember that. The homeland can only be as they imagine, and as they hope to find it upon their return, if millions of its fathers and sons defend it.

The same is true for all Germans abroad. They often live in an entirely foreign, sometimes hostile, world. It should not surprise us that we are not always loved as we defend our right to life. Envy and distrust, hatred and persecution often surround our fellow countrymen. We read about it occasionally in the newspapers, but they experience it every day. In a tiny minority, they are the targets of propaganda hostile to Germany. They are mocked, harassed, see their houses searched, and are put in prison. Why else would they bear it all with pride and dignity? They love the homeland even more deeply than we, and give their full devotion. For us, speaking German is a matter of course, but they are spat on for it. We read German newspapers every day, they get them months later and pass them from hand to hand as a message from the beloved homeland. We listen to the German radio every night, they tinker for hours with their sets to get a few words from the homeland. We see our German films and newsreels whenever we care to, but they have to gather secretly to watch a copy of a film like "The Western Campaign," which we have practically forgotten about.

They, too, would rather be at home than abroad, but they stay at their post to serve the fatherland. They are not worn down by hatred and suspicion. They are the pioneers of Germandom in the world. They are not out to conquer the world, as our enemies say, but to defend their ethnicity. This Christmas Eve we think of them as well as our soldiers, because we know that Christmas is a deeply German holiday that binds us all together. Perhaps they think today that although their tasks are difficult, they still have it easier than Germans abroad had it during the World War, during which they often learned nothing from the homeland other than what our enemies wanted them to hear. Today, they are at least connected to us by radio. They receive our news and speeches, hear German music and German songs, learn of the heroic battles of our troops. In brief, their imaginations have a bridge that each day carries them back home.

And they can be at ease. They will not experience the shame of 1918, when the German people's collapse struck them like a numbing blow. Today the homeland knows what is expected of it, and is giving its full efforts. They have not deserted us and we will not desert them. The homeland would not be worth the sacrifices that millions are making for it were it not ever striving to be worthy of them. Certainly it is not easy. It must give up many familiar habits and accept a thousand large and small privations. Those who live in areas being attacked from the air have much to bear, and deserve the highest praise and warmest recognition.

The whole nation is worthy of the great era in which we live. Still, all the burdens of the homeland are but a fraction of the sacrifices, burdens and privations, the actions and the dangers, that our soldiers endure, or of the persecutions that Germans abroad constantly endure. We at home, God knows, have no reason to complain. We have to accept the war's demands. The war has only made us harder. We will not win by weakness. We must be brave and ever ready. Victory will not be given to us; we have to earn it. Everyone must do his part. Even on this Christmas Eve that must be the focus of our thoughts. The time will come when the war's demands are past. At a later Christmas, we will look back on this Christmas Eve. In the fond light of memory, none of us will wish we had missed it. All the dead of the war will stand as shining heroes before our eyes, those who gave their lives to win a better life for their nation.

There is probably no one among us who in this hour does not look up to heaven. The war has taught us

not only be so strong against our enemies, but also to accept our fate and the will of its godly ruler. We thank the Almighty for the proud victories that he again has given us. We will continue fighting until total victory is ours.

Our time together has come to an end. Our soldiers sit together and talk of home. At home we think only of them, and speak in spirit with them. Germans abroad think once more of the great Reich of the Germans. Then we will all return to the troubles and difficulties, burdens, sacrifices, and privations of everyday life. We may never forget that we all have a responsibility, each in his own way, to work and fight for a rapid victory.

We keep our eye fixed on it. We do not doubt it for a minute. In thinking of the Führer, who on this evening, too, is everywhere where Germans gather, we are reminded of the Fatherland. It will be larger, more beautiful, more prosperous after the war is over. It will be a proud and free homeland for us all. We want to thank the Führer for that. He can depend on his people at the front, at home, and in the wide world. He leads us, and we follow him. Without a shadow of doubt, we follow him bearing the flag and the Reich. The flag and the Reich shall be pure and unstained when the great hour of victory comes.

I greet you from the depths of my heart. Earlier we sang of peace on earth in our songs. Now the time has come to fight for it. Peace through victory! That is our slogan.

May my words bring a scent of the homeland far to the East and the West, to the front against Bolshevism, to North Africa's deserts, to the seas where our submarines and warships sail, to the most distant nations and continents and the farthest corner of the earth where a German heart still beats, but also to the homeland itself, to the cities and the countryside, to every hut and every home.