

Background: This article from *Das Reich* is dated 28 September 1941. Goebbels deals with criticism from neutral journalists on the Russian campaign, and gets in a few digs at Winston Churchill.

The source: “Das Tor zum neuen Jahrhundert,” *Die Zeit ohne Beispiel* (Munich: Zentralverlag der NSDAP., 1941), pp. 584-589.

The Door to a New Era

by Joseph Goebbels

“I was confused in the past, and could not believe in anything great. But now I have seen it all, and ask that if I remain alive, you accept me as a member of the great German workers’ party. If I die, I die gladly for Germany, and am persuaded of everything.”

Those are the words of soldier Joseph Zezetka from Donawitz, taken from a letter to the local group leader of his home town. Millions of similar letters have come from the Eastern Front in the last three months. They give the German people a picture of the hardships and difficulties of the Eastern campaign, of its dangers and physical and mental strains, but also of the firm and unshakable confidence that our soldiers have in victory. No propaganda, no news reports, no pictures could do the job better. Enemy lying propaganda never tires of saying that we are giving the German people a false or incomplete account of the battle in the East. Letters from our soldiers are the best refutation. They write from direct experience, mostly to their closest kin, people from whom they have no need to conceal the truth. They tell the unvarnished truth. They add or subtract nothing. They are the most reliable witnesses of the accuracy of our accounts of the gigantic battle being fought in the East between Europe and its most dangerous and devilish enemy.

There are people unable to appreciate the scale of these military operations. They see things in the scale to which they are accustomed, using the standards with which they are familiar. Such people do not realize that a world battle without precedent is occurring. Bolshevism is using every available resource to resist annihilation. It is a matter of life or death. Only one of us will survive. One must consider what would have happened if the Führer had not acted to deal with the Soviet danger. Only then can one understand what is at stake. Our soldiers are witnesses to Moscow’s plans. They have seen with their own eyes the preparations made for the destruction first of Germany, then of Europe. They also have first hand experience with the Soviet system, and can see the true conditions in the paradise of workers and farmers. This will have a major influence on the future. Just as there was no argument about the Jewish question in Germany after the Polish campaign, there will be no debate any longer about Bolshevism once the Eastern campaign is finished. This is more than a campaign or even a war. It is an historic battle with fate in the broadest sense of the word.

The same is true of its dimensions. It is understandable that its extent and force exceed all comparison. But it is ridiculous when foreign, above all neutral, observers evaluate it from their narrow provincial frameworks. When, for example, so-called military writers in Zurich or Bern who have the wisdom of a third-grade school boy write that the operations in the East are not comparable to the area to be conquered, one can say that the battles of annihilation are taking place in areas larger than Switzerland. But what good does it do to talk to our critics about numbers or territory? When we took a hundred thousand prisoners during the World War, schools closed, factories flew the flags, and church bells rang for eight days. Today it seems matter of course to us. Yet such a victory is as important today as it was back then. Today, too, military victories are gained by such spiritual and physical efforts on the part of

the soldiers as can scarcely be understood by laymen. Any important victory is gained by sweat and blood. In the homeland, we do our work day by day and hour by hour, while at the front a heroism that cannot be put in words is taking place. In the newsreels, we see German soldiers cross vast stretches of mud and slime. Stuka pilots dive on enemy positions and supply lines. Riflemen wait by the roadside for a whispered order to charge 20 meters through withering machine gun fire. Engineers stand neck-deep in a river to finish a bridge in the midst of enemy artillery fire. With bare chests, gunners stand next to their weapons and send death and destruction to the enemy. We see pictures of flyers and riflemen, engineers and artillerymen, looking nearly dead as they lie in a ditch or lean against a wall for fifteen minutes of dreamless sleep. Then they are at it again, flying, marching, bridge building, firing guns, despite their weariness snapping at the enemy's heels to keep him from recovering.

The OKW reports say only that the operations are going according to plan. Now and again the victory announcement fanfares sound over the radio and we all hold our breaths. A victory beyond anything in the past has happened.

Our neutral critics can talk all they want. With all their literary and social skills, they probably could not conquer a Soviet village. Their know-it-all articles do not reflect well on them, particularly since they are in no danger themselves as long as the heroic German army is defending Europe, and therefore them as well. They would not have much opportunity to write military criticism if the German army stood aside and let Bolshevism march past. As experience shows, only the German army is in a position to stop that from happening. These people may know a lot and have so many clever things to say, but the Soviets would put an end to them rather quickly. The intelligentsia in the East, at least as much of it as still exists, can speak to that point. They have learned by experience. The so-called intelligentsia in Zurich, Bern, and Stockholm have not learned much. Hatred of National Socialism has blinded them. They are not objective, they are downright prejudiced, to put it politely. They speak about European culture and civilization. Each German soldier fighting in the East does more for that than they do with all their chatter, chatter that is possible only because that same German soldier holds his protective sword over them. That is the way things are.

One has to stay that, even if it stirs up a hornet nest. We know these so-called neutral intellectuals. They do not deserve the name. They do not understand what is happening. They look backwards instead of forwards. They have no idea of what was, and still less of what is coming. They would like to pick things up after the war where they left them when it started. Their sterile fantasies are not sufficient to build the future. They think the possible to be impossible, not to mention that which seems impossible. Nine years ago, they said our political success was impossible. How can they predict our future successes in foreign and military affairs! They can only be persuaded by the facts. If there are no facts for two weeks, they are ready to discard a new age. They investigate the past with scientific thoroughness, but the present is a book with seven seals.

If potatoes are in short supply in Germany for two weeks, they believe that the German people are ready to revolt. They see signs of the collapse of morale if coffee or beer or cigarettes are in short supply, and if the German people fail to welcome such shortages with cheers. If Mr. Churchill gives one of his stupid, bombastic, absurd speeches, they watch eagerly to see how Germany responds. We do not respond at all. We know that Mr. Churchill and his plutocratic clique want our annihilation. We are indifferent to whatever they may say. We just get to work to help the Führer win.

We let no one muddy our view of the greatness of our age. We know that only sacrifice and privation and unprecedented efforts can defeat the sinister threat from our hating, envious enemy. We are prepared. Of course there are the cares and burdens of everyday life. Who would deny that? And who would deny that we all prefer peace to war, and that each of us in quiet moments is making plans for a happier future? We have learned to love life in the midst of danger, and occasionally our fantasies may mislead us with pleasant thoughts of peace and security, of splendor and celebration.

But what does that have to do with Mr. Churchill's hopes that we grow weak and cowardly, or that we even for a moment fall prey to his clever seduction? We spit in his face. He has always been the incarnation of hatred and destruction toward our nation. We know exactly what he would do to us, to our families and our children if we ever fell into his hands. His Jews have revealed that often enough when they raged impotently against us. He cannot fool us. The narrow-minded Swiss politicians remind us of Reichstag representatives from the Economic Party or the Christian Social People's Welfare. They laughed at us as we battled Marxism for the future of the Reich. When the Red Front collapsed, they were forgotten and buried.

This great and unique era is following its course. Time never stands still. It is marching with giant steps toward the future. Happy is he who follows at its heels, for he will be a witness to the blessed hour when the door to a new century opens.