

**Background:** Goebbels began a weekly newspaper called *Das Reich* in 1940. He generally wrote the lead article each week, in which he took special pride. This essay is dated 4 January 1942. Goebbels discusses the prospects for the new year. For a good discussion of Goebbels's wartime essays, see Bramsted's book *Goebbels and National Socialist Propaganda*.

**The source:** "Das neue Jahr," *Das eherne Herz* (Munich: Zentralverlag der NSDAP., 1943), pp. 162-168.

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## The New Year

by Joseph Goebbels

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Countless people in the enemy camp will nervously ask themselves what this new year 1942 will bring for them and their people. Will it be stagnation, setbacks or defeat? The year 1941 took some detours, and turned out entirely differently than our enemies had hoped. One or another may have the nagging doubt as the new year gives occasion add up the state of affairs, to wonder what catastrophes may be coming, or what heavy blows from which they will never recover.

By us to one looks to the past and the future, though under considerably more favorable conditions than the enemy. We are fighting for a just and clear cause. All the omens for victory are on our side. The peoples on our side are young and healthy and their leadership is determined, whatever the cost, to bring the great struggle for the existence of their nations to a successful conclusion.

We are clear about what awaits us in the coming year, and what we have to do; clarity is always the first step to victory. We know that we are fighting for our national, and in most cases our personal, existence. We do not deceive ourselves, or base our hopes on false illusions. We know what exertions victory requires, and we are ready to accept them. The German people live in a difficult political climate in this third year of the war. That is good. None of us is living under an illusion. The tougher the climate, the greater our determination to overcome the difficulties. Experience shows that peoples facing great challenges do not lose strength, but only gain strength. We Germans would not be where we are today if everything had been easy for us. What we are and have is the result of our own efforts. Rarely in history has something been given to us, or fallen unasked for into our laps. Are we a weaker or less valuable people than those who seem to have good luck more on their side than we do? In this great struggle to we are fighting for our lives. The only ones surprised are those who thought war was a kind of sensational entertainment. The strong hearts and mature minds among us expected just what has happened, nothing else.

It is clear that the third year of the war brings problems that we never even thought of during more normal times. It demands a vast transformation of our economy that increasingly forces the needs of civilian life into the background. That is naturally more evident in the war's third winter than it was in its first. The war is going full force. It is no different with our enemies. The home front shares its fate with that of our soldiers, though they have encountered war in its harshest form since September 1939. The longer the war lasts, the more the home front will share the feelings and experiences of the front. That is no cause for complaint, but rather in the interests of the front is to be welcomed.

We have always maintained that the best way to lead people is to freely and confidently discuss the problems that concern us all. That naturally does not mean public discussion of military and political secrets, which democracies often do to their own harm. There are still a large number of questions that no one can deny, since they affect each individual in one way or another. These are mostly the problems

of everyday life that confront us all, They are mostly the result of the war, and affect the enemy as much as us. Insofar as they can be solved at all during the war, it is through common effort and mutual aid. To lay them before the people and discuss them is not a sign of weakness, but rather a sigh of strength and confidence. No one, for example, expects the railroad to schedule trains for vacationers when there are potatoes, coal, vegetables, munitions and weapons to move. Few are distressed with Christmas candles are available in limited numbers, since these are badly needed on the Eastern Front. One not only may, one must explain such things. Our people certainly understand this, since it is after all their fathers and sons at the front, and all the privations of the homeland are to their benefit.

Finally, most problems are solvable only with the help of the people. The people join in more readily when they know what is happening and why.

The gentlemen in England practically make a profession out of concluding that we are weak because we openly discuss the difficulties of the war. We will refrain from pointing out their own difficulties, lest they have to slap themselves in the face. They are so proud of their so-called free democracy that discusses everything. Were we to conclude from the daily debates in English newspapers something about the condition of England, we would have to believe that the empire was ready to collapse.

We do not worry about such matters, since we believe that the war will be decided by hard facts, and such a fact is not the complaint by Mr. Smith in the *Daily Telegraph* that he once again had to stand in line for an hour to buy five cigarettes, and besides that, it was raining. We conclude only that tobacco is as scarce in London as it is in Berlin, which is some comfort. But would it not be just as foolish for us to conclude from that that the British Empire is near collapse as it is for the English to believe that the Germans will revolt because Christmas items are in short supply?

By the way, what business is it of the English? They poke into our troubles not to help us, but only to score propaganda points. They would hardly point it out if we had sufficient tobacco products in comparison to their shortage. We are waging war against each other. As is well known, any method of warfare is fine with the English, as long as it hurts the enemy. Why should we pay any attention to what they say? We can expect only that which is bad and harmful. They will complain whether things are going well or poorly for us, and they presumably pay such loving attention to our troubles because they hope to divert us from doing something about the troubles by their shouting.

How little they know us! One who examines the history of our party and the National Socialist movement will note that we rarely have been afraid, and never of so-called world opinion. We too often have seen with what despicable means and base goals world opinion is made to have any respect for it. It is therefore only of psychological interest for us to see what London journalists and radio announcers do after our articles have been read over the radio. They always find something to distill from even the simplest and clearest sentence that can feed their empty hopes. How many pens have they worn out! They have been doing it for over a year, but has anything changed? Not at all! It was wasted effort. Nothing has come of British illusions. They will probably keep at it. We will continue to speak openly about problems as much as possible, paying no attention to English slanders. We gain, the English do not.

People, and the Germans in particular, are tougher than one often thinks. One only has to make it clear what has to be done and they set eagerly to work. Can anyone give an example of a time when we took an important question to the people without success? The German people are always ready to follow even the hardest and most uncomfortable requests of their government, as long as one has explained persuasively their necessity. The readiness of our people is always much greater than one expects.

No one, for example, will dispute the fact that wool and fur coats are very rare in Germany at the moment, and that one cannot replace them during the war. Two weeks ago we announced a winter clothing drive for the front. The appeal was not yet over when the telephone began ringing off the

hook, blocking the telephone lines to the ministry for hours. Baskets full of letters and telegrams arrived in the following days. None complained, but all offered good and useful proposals, or asked questions about when and where one could donate. As we studied the British newspapers and radio in the following days, we noted with interest that London expected the outbreak of a revolution, seeing the collection of winter clothing for the front as the first sign.

We leave the English to their pleasures. They understand as little about the German people as a cow does of nuclear physics. They will pay a heavy price for their illusions. For us, we shall remain tough and relaxed, thinking realistically, never losing our ground, dealing with the problems of the war as they appear, and beginning the new year with the same determination with which we mastered the old one.

We will manage, whatever may happen.