

Background: For months, Goebbels and the Nazis had been speaking of revenge weapons. The German population was longing for some sign of them. A week after D-Day, the first V-1 rockets fell on London. This is Goebbels's first article that deals with their use. He is optimistic, but realized that Germans could come to expect too much of them. See an earlier article from *Das Reich* [for more on the V-1](#).

The source: "Die Frage der Vergeltung," *Das Reich*, 23 July 1944, pp. 1, 3.

The Question of Revenge

by Joseph Goebbels

As our V-1s raced over the English Channel for the first time during the night of 16 June, the English public was struck by paralyzing fear. The British Home Secretary Morrison saw himself forced to speak to the House of Commons the next morning about the use of our new weapon of revenge. He did that in a very tortured manner, openly admitting the seriousness of the situation for the British capital, but also attempting to reduce or even deny the serious effects of our revenge weapon. He apparently believed that he could deceive us about the extent of the damage caused, which was not possible, since our months of tests gave us opportunity to understand the new V-1 weapon in every detail, in particular its accuracy and explosive force. But there was yet another crucial reason behind the British home secretary's attempt to make our first revenge weapon ridiculous. He did not want to give foreign countries the chance to learn the effects of the V-1, particularly since English government circles hoped to develop sufficient defensive measures. These hopes have proved vain. Nearly every day, the London press wrote about a new and effective, or even more effective, defensive measure, but none of them so far has been able to stop our V-1s from flying undisturbed, and in large numbers, toward London.

Now the English government has given up its attempts to deceive its own public and the world as to the extent of the damage. Indeed, they are increasingly doing the opposite, dramatizing things in an emotional manner to arouse the world's sympathy, and making every effort at injured or tortured innocence. The English are making such efforts to appear the good guy that one has to assume that they do not realize how ridiculous that looks. It is enough to recall all their praise few months ago for the brutal and cynical attacks of the Anglo-American air forces on the German civilian population. When we spoke then of the barbaric nature of such a method of warfare, London replied with mocking laughter. They thought it no longer necessary to wear a humanitarian mask. One had the power, one was on the way down from the mountain peak, and the Reich was no longer a subject, merely the object, of the war. One could do to it what one wanted. Even more than that, in fact; Germany had to be treated in a way formerly used only on defenseless Negro tribes. One no longer paid any heed to the world public or the conscience of the world, which one had so often called upon before. That is how it was if we look back to the beginning of the year. The Western enemies no longer even bothered to keep up appearances. They openly and cynically named their bombs "blockbusters," and gave their "Flying Fortresses" names like "Murder, Inc." The English in particular showed their true nature in the plainest manner, without covering anything up.

When we modestly said that we might still have a word or two to say in this regard, that we were preparing new weapons of revenge that would one day fall on England, those in London fell over laughing, and asked us witty questions about whether these new weapons were invented by propagandists rather than scientists and engineers. We did not then think it necessary to persuade the English of the correctness of our announcements. We knew that sooner than the English public would

like, facts would speak louder than words. And England has certainly lost the desire to laugh. Even its prime minister, who is usually so fond of cynical jokes, found nothing funny to say about the V-1 in his last speech to the House of Commons. And one has the impression that the London press cannot and will not trivialize things as much as the British home secretary apparently wished. For the first few days, English newspapers called our V-1 the "doodlebug." Now they call them "robot bombs." That alone shows the change in their opinion from yesterday to today.

No one can say that the English have given up their appeals to humanity and the conscience of the world in this regard. They made too much of that during their major and successful terror attacks on the German civilian population. Back then, we warned of what is happening today, and said that we were taking careful note of the most cynical voices of British public opinion on the bombing war, since we would be able to make good use of them one day. Now that time has come. It is not persuasive for London to insist that the German V-1 lacks the accuracy and military value that British night attacks on the German homeland last winter presumably had. One need only look at bombed German cities to readily prove the very opposite. If the Royal Air Force's bombs actually did have some accuracy, British pilots made no use of it when attacking the German civilian population. They above all chose the cultural centers and heavily populated residential areas of our cities to bomb, largely destroying them, while British public opinion, including its prime minister and archbishop, applauded. Those English newspapers that write that England will be repaid for what it did are correct. It does not take great prophetic gifts to say that, since in contrast to our usual modesty, we predicted it clearly dozens of times.

The newest English objection to the V-1 is that it is vile and unfair, since it is not directed by anyone on our side, but kills and injures people on the enemy side. That is not persuasive. Almost the same thing could be said of British night bombing attacks. Last winter, the weather was so bad that our night fighters were unable to take off. Yet those were just the nights the British preferred for their attacks on the German homeland. When we objected, London told us coldly and bluntly that the purpose of war was to employ and lose as few of one's own men as possible, not as many, and to cause the enemy as much damage as possible, not as little.

Is not our V-1 the perfect fulfillment of this British desire, and does anyone doubt that if the English themselves had this weapon, they would make full use of it, and would also be able to find reasons to claim it was fair and moral? In London, the newspapers are screaming for revenge. They do this only to make the world forget that our V-1 attacks are already revenge. If the English could take revenge, they would not hesitate. They and their U.S. ally have enough airplanes at their disposal. These, however, are needed for the invasion beachhead. Were they to be taken from there, it would be an advantage for us that is not to be underestimated, which itself proves that, despite British claims, our V-1 has clear military goals and purposes. The English do not want to admit that because they are appealing to the world's pity.

We do not want to cynically welcome the use of our first revenge weapon, or look forward with glee to coming ones. We would have been happy if it had been possible to conduct the war, also the air war, in a humane and knightly manner. But it was the English who did not want that. They never accepted proposals that would have been good for the fighting armies and peoples. As is well known, this attitude on the part of the British cabinet was responsible for the war back in 1939. But London will not listen to reason. One deludes oneself, and comes to the wrong conclusion.

How often over the past months has the English government used its captive press to claim either that there were no German secret weapons, or that if there were, London knew all about them and was prepared for them. If they did not exist, how can they be in use, and if London knew all about them, how is it possible that our V-1s are flying undisturbed toward London, that women and children are being evacuated from the British capital, that the larger part of London's population is sleeping in

packed subway stations, and that, as English newspapers report, the British people can only talk about German revenge weapons — but yet the English government has taken no defensive measures? Although we have the most cause to be satisfied, we take no pleasure in the desolation our revenge is causing in London. We see it only as a defensive measure that is having an effect. We even shudder to think about what the British capital has to expect from our future and more deadly revenge weapons.

Our revenge action is not at an end, but at its beginning. Military experts far and wide are of the opinion that our revenge weapons are a revolution in military technology. What will they say when our newest and even more impressive weapons come into use! Did London really think that we would simply allow Anglo-American air terror to continue without objection? That we would not take appropriate steps? It may be that the enemy's scientists are ahead of German scientists in one area or another of military technology, even if their work is based on German research that we unfortunately saw the military significance of too late.

However, one would underestimate German thoroughness and German scientific fanaticism if he assumed that our institutes and laboratories had given up. They have done more than the enemy likes. Their latest inventions are nearly all finished. Some are in the final testing stages, but most are already in production. We are not among those who see technology as the single decisive factor in modern warfare, but it is important. In the past, the enemy was ahead of us in technology, we were ahead in morale. Morale and technology together lead to victory. We can and will surpass him in technology, but he cannot and will not surpass us in morale. That is the decisive advantage on which we must build. Here will we see who in the end has the most endurance.

For our enemy, modern warfare has little to do with humanity. They have been hard and uncompromising toward us; we must face them in the same hard and uncompromising way. They will use every method of warfare they have against us, if it has any prospect of success. We have to do the same to save our necks. We are ahead in one area, they in another. It depends on who fights with the greatest fanaticism, who has the better ideas, who the better morale on the battlefield. He will win. It is not important where the last battle is fought, rather that one has enough regiments and divisions, and that they fight as well on the last day of the war as they did on the first. The fortunes of war will always shift. He who wants to accomplish great things must also accept great risks and dangers. That is what proves the hard and manly character of a warring nation — the determination to defend its life and freedom to the last breath, never showing even the slightest sign of weakness. The stronger peoples will win this war, and they alone will have the moral and historical right to form a new world, for they have earned it with their blood and with the lives of their best sons. The weapons that they use are signs of their inventive genius and their unbreakable will for national existence and freedom. Those weapons do not determine success by themselves. More important is the morale of a people, its firm determination to fight and to win, its absolute faith in the justice of its cause. We have all of that. The enemy has only greater numbers, and better technology for a while in a few areas. We must catch up in those areas and surpass him.

We speak neither from a sense of superiority nor of weakness. We are absolutely confident of our cause, even though we have had severe trials. We would have had to doubt the duration of our victory if France had fallen to us without a fight in summer 1940. That would have been too easy for us, and we could hardly have survived the later hard tests. Fate can be mastered only through hard struggle. When the war is over, we will all know the price that we have paid. No one then will be willing to endanger what we have gained through carelessness or a lack of alertness.

The coming victory will belong to all of us, for we will all have fought, worked, and suffered for it. We will therefore make its results a matter for the people as well, both its benefits as well as its costs. Today everyone must stand firm, fanatically and without compromising. The nation is called to that. It lacks neither means nor opportunities; it need only use them. If it does that, it can look to the coming

storms with sovereign confidence. They resemble nature's thunderstorms that break over the cities and countryside with elemental force, but then suddenly, as if by a divine hand, the darkness of the heavens is parted and the sun begins to shine again.