

**Background:** The end was in sight in December 1944 when Goebbels wrote this article attempting to persuade the German nation to fight on. He makes the interesting claim that the Germans are more open in their news coverage than the Allies, and uses his powerful marathon runner image, suggesting that Germany's enemies were as near exhaustion as Germany itself. He would develop this argument again in more detail in a later speech on 28 February 1945.

**The source:** "Die Weltkrise" *Das Reich*, 17 December 1944.

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## The World Crisis

by Joseph Goebbels

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We Germans are not the only ones in the sixth year of war. One may assume that the problems the war's long duration have given us also affect the other combatant nations. Each warring nation is naturally eager to conceal this from the eyes of the enemy and present a facade that does not accurately reflect the true situation. The war is having the same effects on all participating nations, but one can see those effects faster and more clearly in one's own country than in the enemy's. As we always say, the other side is no better than we are. The German people loves the truth, indeed is fanatic about it. It therefore finds it hard to understand that in war everyone must play by the same rules to have a chance at success. Recently the U.S. military leadership admitted the loss of a 20,000 ton troop ship two years ago. That would not be possible with us. The German people would not accept such silence on the part of its leadership. It wants to know exactly how things stand, sometimes forgetting that what is told to it is also told to the enemy. One can argue about which way in the long run is the most successful, but it is clear that our enemy knows how to stay silent better than we do, and that we as a result are inclined to think their situation is better than it in fact is.

As a result we must occasionally consider the war's broad picture, not forgetting that it is likely that things are concealed from us by the enemy's greater secretiveness. The fact that the enemy conceals his calamities from us does not mean they do not exist. They exist nonetheless and influence the overall state of the war, even if we do not know it. The extent of total Soviet losses, which can be estimated at about 15 million, certainly has consequences for the Bolshevik military potential. If the Red Army continues to attack nonetheless, it does not mean that Soviet reserves are inexhaustible, but rather that the Kremlin is using everything it has to defeat us as quickly as possible in the hopes that it can carry out its planned extermination of the German people with what remains of its armed strength. That is also true to a certain extent of the Western enemy. The resources of the military leadership grow steadily smaller because of the long duration of this gigantic war, and it is probably true that in the end the last regiment will decide the last battle.

The fact that we are still firmly on our feet and show not the least sign of collapse is sufficient proof that our enemies cannot do what they want, that they suffer from internal problems, and that they make such terrible threats only to keep us from noticing that. It is well known that at the point during the First World War when the German leadership thought the situation was hopeless and prepared the Reich for capitulation, the British military leadership told its government clearly that England's losses on the Western Front were so great that it was necessary to seek an agreement with Germany to end the war. If the leadership of the Reich had known that, it would have undoubtedly made a different decision than the one it blindly made.

The reasons for its uncertainty and weakness would have been insignificant a few months later, not to

mention today. In the end, one cannot deal with a national crisis of this magnitude by reducing the fat and bread rations, important as solving the crisis may seem at the time. The German leadership had not known that a large part of the French army mutinied in 1917, and that a single energetic German blow would have been enough to break through and perhaps force a decision to our advantage. France then saved itself by silence. Who can be sure than England, for example, is not doing the same today? Its government has already admitted that in the course of this war various things have happened that we did not realize at the time. One can therefore draw the conclusion that we learn little about the enemy's real difficulties during a war, and that one can assume that at any given time things are happening, even if they are not publicly discussed.

We must behave accordingly. We are in the midst of war, one in which we are defending our very existence. Everything we do must take that into account. It is irrelevant whether or not that agrees with the fanaticism for objectivism on the part of some confused minds. The war is a deadly serious matter, not only at the moment, but also in terms of its future consequences. Our enemy is attacking us with all their resources, and we have to use all our resources in defense. The difficulties that may cause us are of secondary importance in comparison to what is at stake. The war is equally hard on all participating nations and people. We cannot postpone its burdens to some other day, even if they sometimes descend upon us with devastating force. The marathon runner cannot stop running at the 35th kilometer because he fears that his lungs will fail and say that he will finish the race the next day. He must either keep running even if he fears his heart will fail, or else give up. The time to make history is short, and he who does not use the opportunity fails. The burdens of such a time certainly may seem unbearable, but those burdens decide which nation is called to victory and which is damned to defeat.

One should never think that our enemies have it better than we do. First, one cannot know that for sure, and second, a range of signs point to exactly the opposite. The Soviet losses, for example, are enormously greater than ours, yet they continue to attack. England has had to sacrifice the wealth it has gained over the centuries, and shows no sign of giving up now. We have no choice but to carry on the war, however bitter it may be, if we do not want to risk having made all our previous sacrifices in vain. And one cannot say that those on top have it good, since they take on all the burdens of the people. Their sons fall at the front as do the other sons of our people, and the leadership carries a responsibility that would break lesser men. It is not true that the war's burdens are distributed unequally. The life of our whole people is at risk and we must defend it with our entire national strength. This is no war of the army and no war of the party, but rather a holy people's war.

We are living through the greatest crisis of occidental humanity. The crisis has been caused by the Western-democratic-plutocratic world and is carried on today by them despite the fact that they themselves are the prime sufferers of the alarming events. No one can say that the Führer did not make every attempt to find a peaceful way out, because he knew from the beginning the terrible consequences that war would have. The Western camp hindered his efforts, and today is paying a huge cost for its stubbornness. England is already complaining about the loss of all the wealth it built during the Victorian era, and who knows what a devastating position it will be in when this gigantic struggle ends. But what good does this knowledge and these predictions do us when the enemy leadership holds stubbornly to its decision to carry on the war at any price, with the goal of destroying Germany and exterminating the German people. We must therefore fight with all our strength, even if all of Europe has to suffer gravely as a result. It is not our fault, but rather it is the fault of the British who are running amuck. Their only war aim is a sick desire for revenge on Germany. They will never live to see their pathological desires fulfilled, but they will see their Empire destroyed and the British people fall from the proud heights of their former power and prestige. Germany is and will remain the fulcrum of all the world's conflicts, and how important it is and how far its influence reaches will become suddenly and drastically clear when this war ends. It all hangs on our ability to keep going and not do

our enemies the favor of stopping before we have finished.

Especially since the last summer, we see the war in an entirely different light. Until then we saw it only from the military perspective, but we have gotten more and more used to seeing it as a world crisis that today is seen primarily from the military aspect. The war has called into question every part of our life and every aspect of international relations that existed before the war began. This war will leave no one in the same inner or outer condition in which he entered it. One may regret that, but there is nothing one can do about it. Not only the buildings of our cities and the cathedrals and cultural monuments of Europe are falling into ruins, but also a whole world. Some love that world, others think it damned. The world of bourgeois egotism and super-individualism has proven itself sterile and incapable of effectively and fruitfully organizing the life of a people. With its passing bourgeois phraseology also fails, the art of saying little or nothing in many words and of concealing the real problems of the peoples through a series of stupid conferences.

Since 1933, the German nation has attempted to build a new and better world in peaceful ways. Its enemies from the bourgeois-plutocratic world did not want that, and did not shrink at the decisive hour from calling on world Bolshevism for help its attempt to strangle the founding of our people's new community. One has only to ask two questions. Where would the peoples of Europe be today if they had imitated the German effort to solve the problems of the twentieth century? And what is their situation today, having fought a bloody war against Germany, and what crimes against humanity have they committed? The enemy nations of Europe under diabolic leadership have in fact transformed heaven into hell.

Still, nothing has yet been lost that cannot be restored. The plutocratic leaders can hardly believe that it will be possible to deceive the people about the extent of their sacrifice as they did after the First World War. Unfortunately, Germany has not been able to carry out a peaceful exchange of ideas and goods. Today, it faces the historical necessity of a defensive war. The decision of our enemies to attack us with weapons brought the latent crisis that followed the First World War into the open, and it must now not only be faced, but mastered. The German people has its own historical mission to fulfill. Whether or not the other nations want to admit it does not change the fact that we Germans today are the pathfinders for a new civilization of the nations, and also of a better and nobler humanity. For us, this war will result in a people's state of the purest nature. It will include all levels and classes, a home for the strong as well as the weak, an object of pride for the whole world. It will rise like a phoenix from the ashes that this war has covered Europe with. One can only smile at the English dreams of teaching the German people after the war. The first attempt would make it clear to them that they had nothing to give, but everything to take. The new and better order has its core in the Reich, and the German people are its bearers and guardians. The flames of our burning cities are torches lighting the way to the goal.

This war is far more to us than a military drama of shattering tragedy. It is a crisis of humanity, and the only nation that will master it is the one sure of its cause, the one that knows exactly what it wants, but also wants exactly what it knows. The war leads therefore like a judgment of God and looks past everything to a higher historical Providence that has called Germany to suffer much in order to become much, to bear much to learn much, and above all to want much in order to be able to do great things.