

Background: Goebbels launched a weekly German journal of opinion called *Das Reich* in May 1940. This is Goebbels's lead editorial from the first issue. The Germans had conquered Denmark, Norway, Holland and Belgium and were charging into France. Things looked good, and Goebbels was in a boastful mood.

The source: "Die Zeit ohne Beispiel," *Das Reich*, 23 May 1940, pp. 1, 3.

A Unique Age

by Joseph Goebbels

History does not repeat itself. As with everything creative, its imagination and opportunities are inexhaustible. However, it always follows eternally valid laws. Because these laws are ignored or violated in the same or similar ways by nations or people, they apparently lead to similar situations or results.

It is therefore wholly wrong to compare this war with the World War, or to seek parallels in their phases. The age in which we live, and this war, are unique in nature and conduct, unparalleled in history. He who attempts to evaluate them by past standards runs the risk of making the worst political and military mistakes.

Even our national situation, and the whole international one, is entirely different than 1914. Because of the sterile foreign policy of the period, we were forced into a two-front war with intolerable military burdens. Furthermore, our people was not psychologically prepared for war. The people had no idea why it was fighting, nor what it was fighting for, and the government did nothing to let it know what the situation was, and what the future would be. The German government missed every diplomatic opportunity to stop London's encirclement plans. They practically gave their trump cards to the enemy. At the beginning of the war, they were prepared only for the most favorable circumstances, and were thus surprised by unfavorable developments. There formerly had been much better and more promising opportunities to fight the war that had now become unavoidable. They were surprised at the worst possible time, and then declared war themselves, which was to be of decisive psychological significance.

Today, the situation is reversed. The Führer's brilliant statesmanship succeeded by tireless diplomatic efforts in destroying attempts at encirclement, either in advance or through military means. False claims of neutrality, intended only to provide a march route to Germany, were destroyed, and a dangerous two-front war avoided. Germany's back is secure in this battle of fate. And our psychological war is being waged most successfully, not only at home, but also in the rest of the world. The nation knows exactly what is at stake. It knows what it is doing, is fully aware of what would happen if it lost the war, and knows the opportunities it will have if it wins. Every conceivable resource is being used in this gigantic struggle. The opponent lost one trump card after another, even before the war began. The Führer prepared for this historic conflict with care and foresight, planning for the worst, and thus preparing for the best. And at the critical hour, the Western plutocracies declared war, clearly putting themselves in the wrong.

During the World War, we faced a deadly blockade. Germany had prepared only militarily, and that in an inadequate way. It was defenseless against a blockade. It had neither practice nor experience, and thus either took no measures at all, or took them so late that they did more harm than good. The rationing system was corrupt, which was a heavy psychological burden for people, and also made a

consistent implementation of necessary economic measures impossible. It is therefore no surprise that the Reich succumbed to its enemies in this area in November 1918.

Today our situation in no way resembles the former situation. True, the English-French plutocracy tried again to use the old methods of economic encirclement against the Reich, but these methods have lost their effectiveness. We prepared for a blockade. We knew its deadly effects from the World War, and thus did everything we could to be ready for it. We are prepared economically to wage war. The experiences of the World War were helpful. Our enemies mocked our Four-Year Plan, but it prepared us to survive even the tightest blockade. The Reich secured its economic and agricultural resources in such good time that we are safe from any unpleasant surprise. Corruption is impossible due to the most severe penalties. The Reich has sufficient reserves of raw materials to fight for as long as necessary.

Militarily, we entered the World War without taking full advantage of our enormous population resources. We were then the strongest military power in the world, but could not resist the attack of the entire world. The tragedy of the first historic weeks of the gigantic battle was that we lacked the divisions on our endangered right flank, divisions that we could have had. All the later measures could not help.

Today, the German military has the most modern technical equipment imaginable. The German population is being used fully. The German military is therefore prepared for any offensive. Everything is happening as planned, according to a firm system. Our army's achievements are beyond all praise. They are admired by the whole world.

In 1914, we were completely on the defensive psychologically. The Reich viewed the war from a middle class perspective, without realizing that we faced a world of enemies who were determined to use every method of falsehood and incitement. The German leadership had no experience in the battle for public opinion. It had no concept at all of the people's dynamism. It settled for loud shouts of patriotism rather than any real confidence or sovereign spiritual attitude, which alone lead to victory. We faced hate-filled, treacherous and slanderous international enemies who knew how to make the leadership of the Reich look bad in every matter.

How different is our situation this time! Here, too, Germany is clearly on the attack. It knows how to use the weapon of truth with sovereign assurance. Its news policy is fast, practiced, clear and powerful. It is prepared in every last detail to deal with public opinion at home and in the world. The German nation did not enter this war with the momentary enthusiasm of a bonfire, but rather the German people are fighting with clarity and determination. Thus it is no longer possible to use the international atrocity stories that were so extraordinarily dangerous to the Reich during the World War.

And the German army today has the magic aura of invincibility and of a glorious revolution, which is of enormous importance. True, the world is still wavering between limitless hatred and unlimited admiration in its evaluation of this so-called German miracle. But it really was no miracle. Guided by the hand of a genius of historic greatness, the National Socialist system has been victorious. This man's inspiring effect has awakened the spirit of a new ideal from the old German virtues: the precision of thinking and labor, the fanaticism of systematic preparation, a readiness to sacrifice, the greatest intelligence paired with imagination and inventiveness, sovereign knowledge, boundless enthusiasm on the part of the whole people, a youthful spirit of attack — in short, the ability to make of the German misery forced upon us by our enemies a brilliant virtue. What is it that from the beginning has guaranteed the success of the German military on every battlefield of this war? For the first time in history, creative German genius is freed of all bureaucratic and dynastic restrictions, and now has full freedom. Germany had always been as strong as it is today, but it did not know it. Never before in its history was it able to discipline itself, to use its full strength, and to develop a government structure that allowed it to make full use of its political and military opportunities.

That is yet another reason why a comparison to 1914 is completely wrong. The German people held on for four years only because its inner strength was so strong that it survived all the weaknesses and failures of its government. Today, it is different. The German people is able to fully use its national reserves of strength. What is winning today is a system prepared in 14 years of struggle and in seven years of practical work. It was given its creative spirit by a brilliant political and military genius, and can now live from its own strength.

It is very easy for foreigners to attribute our political and military successes to an improbable sequence of good luck. It is the kind of luck that, as Moltke once said, only the virtuous have over the long term. We therefore face no really serious political or military developments in this war. Our enemies may be forced to imitate our methods, which they hate so much. One often says in the enemy camp that National Socialism can be fought only by using National Socialist methods, or something similar. However, we know only too well how much sweat, how much work, how much experience, and above all how much time, is necessary to achieve even the first successes. Today the enemy camp is shouting: "Arms, arms! More planes, more tanks!" Blind fools! We have exerted our full energy, with an unequaled national rhythm, sacrificing our people's ease and comfort, to reach our goals. In the seven years we sacrificed to build our military, foreigners mocked our slogan: "First guns, then butter!" Today it is clear that one cannot conquer cannons with butter, but that cannons can conquer butter. From today's standpoint, they did us a favor in 1918 by taking our old weapons from us. We had to build our German military from the ground up so that it is not only the largest, but also the most modern, army in the world. We spared no expense, no sacrifice, no effort, to ensure that if war came, we would have to, have to, have to win it, or else lose our life as a nation.

Mr. Churchill and Mr. Reynaud will not be able to persuade the world that France and England can recover from the first terrible blows they have received. The parallels that their newspapers draw to 1914 — parallels that show their anxiety and bad conscience — are entirely wrong. In 1914, we had real weaknesses in our national defenses that our enemies could exploit. Today that is no longer the case. Our enemies are recalling retired old generals in their mid-70's and 80's, hoping they can provide a second "miracle on the Marne." We can tell them that history does not repeat itself. It is too much to hope for that after agitating, threatening, and terrorizing the world for years, they can overcome their enemy by an unearned miracle.

Miracles, too, have to be earned. Plutocracy has no way to escape today. It is trapped. It began this war confident that it could wage this war without bloodshed, using only economic blockade. Now it faces the hard necessity of having to fight. Thank God, they have left us in no doubt about what they would do to us if we lose: They prophesy the dissolution, dismemberment and destruction of our Reich and nation. Every German knows that. We had time enough to reflect on it during the long, hard winter months — all of us, German soldiers, farmers, and workers.

The lords of the western plutocracies now have to fight these soldiers. Our farmers grow the daily bread for these soldiers, and the workers behind the front forge their weapons. They all know that in these days, weeks, and months, Germany's fate for a thousand years to come will be decided. They are deeply aware of living in a unique age. They want to prove worthy of it, thus proving that they are a unique people as well.