

**Background:** This article is dated 24 June 1939. Goebbels tells Germans that England beat Germany in World War I by propaganda, and that they are trying the same tricks again. But, Goebbels says, Germans have learned their lesson, and won't be fooled again. This became a major German propaganda theme. The claim was that since England had lied during the previous war, it would lie again in World War II.

**The source:** "Die abgehackten Kinderhände," *Die Zeit ohne Beispiel* (Munich: Zentralverlag der NSDAP., 1941), pp. 181-187.

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## Children With Their Hands Chopped Off

by Joseph Goebbels

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The English are well known throughout the world for their lack of political scruples. They are experts at the art of hiding their misdeeds behind a facade of virtue. They have been at it for centuries, and it has become such a part of their nature that they hardly notice it any longer. They carry on with such a pious expression and deadly seriousness that they even convince themselves that they are the exemplars of political virtue. They do not admit their hypocrisy to themselves. It never happens that one Englishman says to another with a wink or a smile "We don't want to fool ourselves, do we now." They do not only behave as if they were the model of piety and virtue — they really believe that they are. That is both amusing and dangerous.

One has to be on the alert when dealing with them. They managed to conquer the world because they never encountered a worthy opponent. In the last three centuries we Germans often had comparable strength in Europe, but we were usually far inferior when it came to exploiting national and international opportunities. The English were unshakably confident in their belief that Great Britain's world domination was a sign of divine providence. Those who attempted to resist, or defend themselves against the empire were ruthlessly suppressed, using the occasional low blow when it was necessary. The English always talked about their nobility and sense of fair play, but they were anything but when circumstances required. We saw enough proof of that at the end of the war, and in the years from 1919 to 1933.

We Germans, on the other hand, have been a political people only in the past few years. England recognizes this change as a major political danger in Europe. It was entirely different before the war. England then could do to Germany what it wanted. We were a harmless people who went about our business, giving the world our poets, musicians, and philosophers, never realizing that there were other nations just waiting for the opportunity to knock us flat.

England was at the center of it all. It found the occasion, the method, and the results. The war caught Germany entirely by surprise, proof that we had not wanted it. Then England got moving. English propaganda turned the whole world against us. One had not thought them capable of it. The experts found its planning and execution brilliant. English propaganda was limited to a few powerful slogans. With devilish depravity, they were spread systematically throughout the entire world and pounded into the brains of millions of people. At the end, they were helpless victims of mass hypnosis.

There were really only a few slogans that the English spread throughout the world. They spoke of children's hands chopped off, eyes poked out, women raped, and old people tortured.

Long years of anti-German propaganda campaign persuaded the whole world that Germany was a nation of barbarians, uncivilized and inhumane, and that it was the moral and cultural obligation of the

rest of the earth to destroy Germany and to break its power. Only then could the world know peace and friendship. That made it easy for the rest of the world to join England in fighting Germany.

We Germans had no idea how to respond. We watched the English campaign with honest stupidity. The good German citizen shook his head and wondered how anyone could lie like that. We suffered the consequences at the end of the war. During the last months of the war, England attempted to hammer into the minds of the German population the idea that it was fighting our government, not us. The English did not want to hurt the German people, their war propaganda said. The Kaiser had to go. Then the European nations could end the war.

American President Wilson proclaimed his well-known Fourteen Points. In brief, they announced that the Allies did not want to force peace on the Germans, that none of the warring countries should have to pay reparations, or be otherwise harmed, or lose national honor or territory. The Allies' only demand was to replace the Kaiser with a republic, after which peace with honor would follow for everyone.

These stupid lies were brewed by the English. Wilson was simply the Foreign Office's loudspeaker. And good old Germany believed what England got the Americans to say. We fell into the trap. We did everything that England wanted, and had to pay the bill in the end.

When the news of the German revolution reached London in November 1918, they could hardly believe it. Even the highest circles doubted it. One of England's leading men of the time later said privately that London had not thought it possible that the German people would fall for the swindle.

The results were catastrophic. Germany was robbed of its honor and its land. We were disarmed and robbed of our merchant fleet and navy, and of our colonies. We were given an impossible reparations burden. Its only purpose was to wreck the German economy.

Still, it did have one good result. It taught the German people something. On the one hand Germany was impoverished, but the way was paved for the National Socialist renaissance. Its battle was directed against the Treaty of Versailles, as well as those who benefited from it both at home and abroad. It disposed of those who had signed the Treaty of Versailles and presented those who supported them with the choice either of setting the shameful treaty aside or of being confronted with accomplished facts on the part of a Germany once more strong.

Germany today has been transformed and educated by National Socialism. It joins the great powers, a nation entirely different than that of 1914, and especially 1918. The German people has become political. If it were today as it formerly was, it would be in danger of falling prey to another English swindle, just like that of the war. England is trying to do exactly the same today as it did with such success during the war. England's swindle today is just as blatant, dirty, and impudent as it was back then. They think we are as dumb today as we were then. The men in London think the German people today are as dumb as they rightly thought we were in 1914 and 1918. This is their mistake.

Today the English newspapers openly write that the task of English propaganda is to drive a wedge between the German people and its leadership. But we hear that as clearly as they do, and the German people draws the proper conclusion. That is the goal of English propaganda! They want to split Hitler and the nation. Naturally they find hypocritical and smooth-sounding arguments, just as they did during the Kaiser's day. They say that Germany must return to the camp of the civilized nations. Oh? To the circle of civilized nations that we have come to know during the past 25 years? Those civilized nations that even after the end of the war allowed millions of mothers and children to starve, that sent Negroes to bring culture to the Rhine, that shot Schlageter, stole our colonies, exploited Germany, and coldly and cynically broke their most solemn promises to us, the promises the German people had been deceived by?

It was easy to fool Germany back then. Today, we Germans respond differently. And we now have

ways to defend ourselves against London's lies once the English propaganda machine moves into high gear. It floods the public with scare after scare, spreading countless lies with the most pious expression. They report rebellions by German soldiers, insurrections and strikes in working class districts, growing conflicts between classes, anarchy in the Protectorate. They sympathize with a small circle of opposition clergy and make that cause of a few complaining intellectuals into the cause of England and the entire civilized world.

It does not work any longer. Our people have been educated in the school of National Socialism. We no longer naively accept England's shamelessness. We are defending ourselves, even counterattacking as is the National Socialist custom. And how! Our counterattack is powerful, and hits dead center. When they throw mud at us, we do not stand back 30 meters and wave our little sword. We have developed thick skins. We are not refined aesthetes who get queasy in the midst of political disputes. That annoys the enemy.

The experienced English propagandists for the first time are seeing an opponent facing them whom they did not previously think they had to worry about. They are being surpassed in an area in which they once were the undisputed master. The National Socialist movement has taught the German nation not only to defend against propaganda, but to use it itself. We Germans know something about propaganda. During our struggle for power our enemies had absolute power, yet we threw them to the ground. We are not as defenseless today as we once were. Today we have the most powerful army in the world. We defend an idea that fills us with holy conviction, and we wield a propaganda that hits its target, that is experienced and hardened by battle. We use this spiritual weapon with pleasure and enthusiasm.

The new version of the charge of chopped of children's hands will not work with the German people any more, nor will it persuade most of the rest of the world. People see through John Bull. The world's people know what is going on. England can look for allies wherever it wants, but it will not find them in Germany. There it will find nothing but thundering laughter. Our advice to the propaganda experts in the Foreign Office is to get rid of their old lies and find better ones that will be worth our while to deal with.

If the English want a fight with Germany, they will not be fighting the Führer or a small ruling circle, but a united nation of 80 million Germans. They might want to find a way other than armed conflict. That would have no prospect of success, and would in fact present England with the real danger of losing its Empire. One does London a favor by encouraging it to be realistic, to have a clear understanding of Germany, and to stop the bombast and empty threats. It must face the hard and unchangeable facts.