

Background: Goebbels gave a speech every year on the eve of Hitler's birthday. This is the speech for his 49th birthday in 1938. Austria had been incorporated into the Reich a month earlier, and Hitler seemed infallible.

The source: Joseph Goebbels, "‘Es gibt Männer, die man achtet, bewundert und verehrt — den Führer aber lieben wir.’ Die Rundfunkrede des Reichsministers Dr. Goebbels am Vorabend des Geburtstages des Führers," *Völkischer Beobachter*, 21 April 1938.

Our Hitler

Goebbels' 1938 Speech on Hitler's 49th Birthday

The Führer has probably never had so many happy people gathered about him for his birthday as in this year. All the 75 million people of the Greater German Reich stand before him to express their heartfelt best wishes and deepest thanks to him. In the truest sense of the word, this is a holiday for the entire nation. The banners of National Socialism fly from north to south and east to west. And beyond our borders, millions upon millions of our ethnic clan join with the citizens of the Reich in a unique affirmation of loyalty, connectedness and faithful attachment.

The highest form of joy there is on this earth is to make other people happy. Who has had this joy in fuller measure than the Führer himself. The unhappiest people on whom God's sun shone has become the happiest in this wide

world. Not one German in our great fatherland would wish to be a member of another people or a citizen of another state. That for which all good Germans have always longed and hoped has now become reality under the blessed hand of the Führer: a single people in a great, free and strong Reich.

However justified it is for us Germans to rejoice in this new national good fortune, to be always aware of it, we may also not forget that it did not just fall into our laps like a ripe fruit, but rather that we had to earn it through difficult battle with hard and sometimes bitter sacrifices.

The success that we as a nation may so happily enjoy is the result of great challenges, endless work, and deep responsibility. The Führer was the one who over the past years had to bear most of the challenges, work and responsibility.

People realize this instinctively. In recent weeks, the broad masses of our people joined spontaneously and ever more loudly in the cry: We thank our Führer! They were joined by those in German Austria, and soon it was as if a fanfare resounded throughout the whole Reich. This had a deeper significance. People found their own way of expressing a feeling of thanks that today is shared by all people of German blood. It is a feeling of thanks that can no longer be put into words, but rather it can only call to action.

Often we sat next to the Führer on the terrace of his home on the Obersalzberg. Far in the distance between the mountains, German Salzburg would appear in the silvery sunlight. His mind at least, with all its cares and longings, leapt over the distance and sensed what history would bring, making for a moment reality of imagination. Long columns of people stood outside the Berghof [**Hitler's mountain home**], waiting to march past the Führer. They came from all parts of our great Reich, bringing flowers and mementos, and were heartened by being able to look into the beloved face of the man whom they saw as the embodiment of all our national hope.

It always brought tears when groups or individuals from German Austria came. They usually did not say very much; only rarely was there a shout from their ranks. Usually they marched past the Führer in deep silence. If he called for some of them to come to him, they could rarely answer his questions because their voices became lost in tears.

In these moving moments, we saw in the Führer's face that the pain of his people was his pain, that he shared their pain and misery, that no one could suffer more for his homeland than he.

We remember those nighttime hours of a Wednesday in March, already part of history, in which the former Herr Schuschnigg gave his treasonous speech in Innsbruck, and the first alarming reports reached Berlin. The Führer strode with long steps across the room, and his face displayed godly anger and holy fervor. Here was the best German, whose cradle was in Austria, and who had a far greater right to speak in the name of German Austria than the then spokesman for this so-called independent state. He was deeply wounded by cowardly treachery. This was the decisive turn in events. There was no going back: either Schuschnigg would succeed once again in legitimizing his terror regime through an election swindle, or the people itself would rise up and appeal to heaven for its rights.

Here we learned the Führer's true greatness. The two days of nervous tension that followed showed him at the height of his tactical and strategic command of the means and methods of a well planned and considered political program.

The people still had no idea of what was taking place. They went about as if nothing had happened, walking down Wilhelmstraße to Wilhelmplatz with only a shy and respectful glance toward the Reich Chancellery. Here the Führer lived, here he worked, here he bore all the burdens and responsibility.

Until the decisive Friday when things finally started rolling, and the Führer gave the order to march late in the night.

None of us would have been embarrassed by our tears as after midnight we heard on the radio the Horst Wessel Song being sung for the first time in Vienna. The hour of salvation had come.

If one were to ask me what the greatest difference between a parliamentary democracy and an authoritarian system was, I would answer:

The greater the danger, the more a parliamentary democracy is inclined to pull back, but the more a true leadership personality faces it. It was never a question for the Führer that he had to be with his people at the hour of liberation, and indeed, there where the decision itself was happening.

It is but one proof more of his deep political instinct, rooted in his connection to national feeling and thought, that the hour of greatest danger was also the hour of his greatest triumph.

How moving it was as he crossed the Innsbruck bridge, entering his hometown and birthplace Braunau for the first time in many years. We saw pictures in the newspapers of women giving him flowers as he stepped on Austrian soil.

The eyes of these women shone with the deepest and purest joy, such that one cannot imagine more beautiful human faces. We saw a picture of a man who climbed onto the Führer's automobile with his hands raised as if in prayer, and we had the sense that here the depths of the human soul came to the most perfect expression.

Probably never before have the hearts of all Germans beat faster or more passionately than in these afternoon and evening hours. The nation knew that the Führer was on the soil of our German Austria, and never did his beloved voice seem warmer and nearer than on this evening, when he spoke in Linz for the first time in his homeland. Hundreds and hundreds of kilometers from us, and yet near to us all,

he spoke of the joy that filled his heart.

That was the Führer as a person, the same man who then spoke in Vienna as a statesman and ruler of the national fate as he made his greatest announcement to the German people **[that Austria had been incorporated into the German Reich]**. How he must have felt then, he who as a young man had so often demonstrated in Vienna's streets for the Greater German Reich, and who was therefore persecuted, mistreated and arrested by the dwarfs of the Hapsburg regime.

The dreams of his youth had been realized. He had entered the soul of his people as a man and as the Führer.

Bringing a miracle that was no miracle, only the result of tireless work blessed by the hand of the Almighty.

Perhaps it is also a religious act to put his whole life in the service of his people, and to work and act for the happiness of people. It is a religion without empty phrases and dogma, which nonetheless springs from the deepest depths of our soul. That is how our people understands it. We Germans are today perhaps more faithful and pious than others who, though they never tire of praising God with their lips, have hearts that are cold and empty.

It is therefore no empty phrase when all of us in our great Reich join with those beyond its borders, across seas and continents, in asking the Almighty to grant the Führer long years of health, strength, and a blessed hand. That is the deepest and holiest wish of all the children of our ethnic group and of our blood. May the ether bring through my voice this national prayer of a people to the furthest corner of the earth where Germans dwell, live, and breathe. It is a deep prayer, full of hope, faith, and national pride.

There are men one respects, men one admires, and men one honors. We love the Führer. He is the great symbol of the resurrection of our people, towering over our age.

He is to us what he was to us, and he will remain to us what he is to us: Our Führer!