

Background: In this article dated 9 April 1944, Goebbels explains why Germany was in such a difficult situation. He tries to turn German disadvantages into German strengths.

The source: “Warum wird es uns so schwer gemacht?” *Das Reich*, 9 April 1944, pp. 1, 3.

Why Are Things So Difficult for Us?

by Joseph Goebbels

Many of us will have asked ourselves more frequently over the five years that this war has gone on why it is so especially difficult for the German people to build its national life and its future, why it must make such sacrifices and take on such burdens, things that other, happier peoples are spared, or even know absolutely nothing about. These questions are more than justified. Not only must we fight for our existence with all we have in this war, our whole history is nothing but a path of enormous sorrow. Other peoples reached great or world power status much more easily than we did, and today they have such substantial resources that the length of the war hardly seems to have a material effect on them. We to the contrary must work and slave by the sweat of our brow, and our enemies object to the little that we can call our own.

Is not fate treating us unjustly, and do we not have cause to complain? In no way! Our people is the product of its racial characteristics, its geopolitical situation, and its historical development. The question is only whether it has made and makes all that is possible to make from the material and ideals it has, and whether this will continue to be true in the future. This is a question we must answer ourselves.

Not only our difficult situation, but also our hard and unbendable national character is the result of these conditions. Just as the life struggle of the individual forms his personality, so it is in the lives of peoples. That the German people possesses more character strengths than any other cannot be denied. Ask friend or foe as you wish. For centuries the Reich has been the yeast not only of Europe, but also of the whole world. It is possible to imagine the absence of this or that people from human history with no great change or impact. That is impossible with the German people. Until the Thirty Years War and after, even during centuries of impotence and fragmentation, German history was European history. We gave humanity its pioneers. Even in the circles of our enemies, we were called the nation of poets, philosophers, and inventors. But how can that be reconciled with the fact that we have had so few successes on the field of power politics?

The answer to this question is all too clear: It is because we are of greater value than other peoples, not lesser. Our general fate and the geopolitical location of the Reich simply force us to work harder to develop our national life than our few friends and many enemies. The resulting natural superiority makes us hated and unloved. We must work harder than other peoples if we are even to survive. For this reason they try to keep us from achieving equality or resist us, since they know that if we had the same opportunities as they, we would soon have the advantage over them. They fear the unstoppable rhythm of our national growth, the intensity of our productive force, the genius of our inventive spirit, the high level of our national morale and national discipline, all of which are the result not only of our racial characteristics and our political education, but also of our cramped living conditions. No matter how far back in history we look, our people has always been surrounded by danger. But where the danger is not deadly, it increases strength. That is the case with the German people. It has grown through danger, reaching heights of national ability that no other people can even approach.

This conclusion in no way springs from a sense of national arrogance. It is constantly strengthened and affirmed by the facts of this war. We are holding on to our continent in this fifth year against the assault of four world powers, not to mention many open and hidden lesser enemies, essentially alone, dependent only on ourselves. What other people on earth could do that? Our enemies have repeatedly underestimated our powers of resistance because they are simply incapable of imagining it given the standards that prevail by them. We may be forced to surrender territory in the east to keep our defensive lines intact, but should not forget amid these setbacks that no other people would be able to resist at all. The English and Americans admire Soviet military successes. How much more must they admire us, who are conducting the war in the east against a people double our size, supplied with rich assistance, and with only half of our national strength. In Italy the human and material superiority of two world powers cannot reach their goal against a small fraction of our army. Imagine how the battle would be if we had such superiority and our enemies were surrounded on every side as we are today! The question answers itself.

One can understand why the historically unique heights of war morale and war capacity of the German people always make our enemies nervous. They fear giving us the initiative, which would present them with unforeseeable consequences. That also explains their howls of hatred against the Reich, which are only the result of their inferiority complex. If we are to have a chance of success, we must be more steadfast than they, we must fight more bravely, work harder, and live with greater discipline. The pitiless demand of these virtues is also our advantage and our strength over the enemy. In every war there comes the point when victory depends on these virtues. At the decisive hour the people will better use them than ever before. In other words, our present sorrows and difficulties are not only a burden to us, but also training. It is certainly true that the well-to-do generally enjoy a more comfortable life than hard-working laborers, who earn their daily bread through the sweat of their brow. Yet when the critical hour comes when life itself must be defended, the workers have the advantage for they have had the most experience in fighting for life. The Spartan attitude that our exposed and limited situation has forced on us for centuries is the real cause of our national virtues, and also the reason for the hatred and persecution of our enemies. One is the result of the other; they are bound together.

This war is a battle between higher quality and higher numbers. Its course and above all its length depend primarily on strengthening and preserving that which separates us from our enemies. Therein lies our hope of victory. If ever a people had no reason to feel inferior, it is our people in its present situation. Even setbacks, if they are properly accepted and borne, can only strengthen our conviction of superiority. We were not the cause of this war; our enemies forced it upon us. From the beginning, they have made it plain that their goal was to destroy our life substance and destroy us as a people. The fact that they have attacked us with such numerical superiority is more proof than none of them dares to take us on alone. That our people has held its own so far, and will do so in the future, must give us all reason for pride, for unshakeable national self-confidence. We may never forget that no other people in the world is capable or in the situation to be able to withstand such a test of its life strength as we Germans today. We need only imagine what would happen if we faced one of our enemies alone, although they are with the exception of England each superior to us in population and resources, to know how little ground for triumph our enemies have and how much cause we have for faith in ourselves.

No people can choose the conditions under which it lives and maintains itself, not even we Germans. They develop from many conditions from which the present generation at least cannot escape. As far as the material aspects of the war go, our conditions are anything but favorable when compared to our opponents. But the resulting superiority of character, morality, and ideals balance out the material superiority of our enemies, if only we use them fully. We hold our fate in our hands. The German people today, in the truest sense of the words, is the blacksmith of its own happiness, and not only of

those living today, but of generations yet to come. It is understandable that we sometimes lose sight of the high obligation we owe the future in the midst of the pressure of everyday life and the steadily growing sorrows and burdens of the war. That obligation is there nonetheless. This person or that may ask here or there what he still has to lose. His house and possessions have gone up in flames. His own life seems of little value in view of the gnawing pain of the loss of his loved ones. That question, however bitter it may be to those affected, is egotistical. Even he who has suffered the hardest, most terrible blows in this war still has something to lose: the future of his people.

This has absolutely nothing to do with national pathos. We have not the least desire, nor any ability, to engage in arrogant nationalistic preaching. We only see things clearly and realistically. Whether justly or unjustly, whether from its own guilt or that of preceding generations, our generation has a German mission to fulfill, a mission that seems almost beyond human capacity. It must master an age that commands life to be formed but not enjoyed. Such an age will be better endured by those whose whole nature and temperament are better suited to forming life rather than enjoying it. But neither the one nor the other can escape the age. It is our absolute lord and master. For some the absence of the spiritual and intellectual matters that ennoble life, and which are made almost impossible by this war, may be as hard or even harder than the loss by others of a pound of butter or a side of ham. Neither might find the loss of the other particularly difficult. But each must face the categorical imperative that the duties and tasks that the war and his people place on him.

This has nothing to do with the fact that we may mourn the loss of our possessions or of a loved one. That we can scarcely forget. We all respect the sorrow that affects the individual, and the higher one is, the more one feels the pain of millions. If there were a way to spare our people its sorrow, we would be the first to reach for it with both hands. There is no such way. We must pass through this valley of pain, for only at its end does the great prize glimmer. We cannot and will not give it up. It will crown and justify our sacrifice. All that we have so far willingly and patiently endured will receive its meaning. If we do not succeed, all will have been meaningless. Our own lives and that of our people would fall into a darkness from which no bright and beautiful day would ever dawn.

Against that, what are the enemy's hysterical screams of hate and revenge! They will fade at the hour the war ends and the goddess of history gives us the laurels. From the sounds of this war will rise the heroic fame of our fighting people, which trusting only in its own strength and loyal through all the twists of war's fortunes stayed at the post history had given it. Then we will understand why it so hard for us: To prove that we could use our full strength, holding back nothing, that we could grow even beyond our imaginings, giving an example to all other peoples. And above all, so that in the face of this century's growing skepticism we could prove that the West was not ready for decline, but rather that it stands at a new beginning. The great cultural crisis that fell on civilized humanity with the First World War must be overcome. That is possible only through an abundance of life will and life determination that is shown only by fate's hardest tests. Perhaps Europe will one day realize how close it stood to the abyss. This will bring the admiration for our actions that is today withheld. That is how it will be, not otherwise.

If amidst the worst burdens of this war one gave us the choice, we would never change places with any people under happier circumstances. We choose our own. How could the fact that our people must fight for its existence confuse our thinking? Now more than ever we give it our whole love and all our power and strength. In the storms that rage around us, we are prouder than ever before to be German.