

Joseph goebbels research paper sample

[People](#), [Adolf Hitler](#)



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Textbook Write-up of Dr. Joseph Goebbels

Paul Joseph Goebbels was born to a Catholic, working class family in the Rhineland, Germany in 1897 and attended Heidelberg University on a church scholarship, receiving his PhD in 1921. In early life, his goal was to become a novelist or playwright, but he had limited success in this field and soon found that his true talent was for propaganda and public relations. He joined the National Socialist German Workers Party in 1923 and was made Party leader (Gauleiter) of Berlin in 1926, a post that he retained until his suicide in 1945. Goebbels was strongly devoted to Adolf Hitler and hostile to the Weimar Republic and his propaganda played a key role in its overthrow. Goebbels developed many of the banners, symbols, slogans and songs that created mass appeal for the Nazi movement, including the mass marches and party rallies at Nuremberg and the Host Wessel song.

Hitler appointed him Reich Minister of Propaganda and Public Enlightenment after the Nazis took power in 1933, and Goebbels rapidly brought the mass media, radio, filmmaking, theater, book publishing and the arts under its control. All Jews and persons deemed politically unreliable were expelled

from these professions, while writers, artists and journalists who cooperated with the regime were generously subsidized. Among the most important propaganda feats created by Goebbels in the 1930s were the documentaries by Leni Riefenstal of the 1934 Nuremberg Party rally (Triumph of the Will) and of the 1936 Olympics, which Goebbels carefully crafted to show the new regime in the best light to international visitors and observers. During the war years, Goebbels grew in power and influence, particularly after the defeat at Stalingrad in 1943, when he called on Germans to wage total war and fight to the death, particularly against the Soviet armies advancing from the East. This continued to be one of the major themes of his propaganda until the final defeat of Germany in 1945. Goebbels urged Hitler to remain in his Berlin Bunker until the end, where he committed suicide on April 30, 1945, and he and his wife also killed themselves the next day, after first poisoning their five children.

Sidebar

Goebbels has never really been a subject for ‘heroification’ in the sense that James Loewen meant in that historians generally do not idealize him or omit all the negative aspects of his personality and political ideology. He described this process as “making flesh-and-blood individuals into pious, perfect creatures without conflicts, pain, credibility, or human interest”, but this has definitely not occurred with Dr. Goebbels (Loewen, 1995, p. 29). Loewen was thinking more of historical figures like Helen Keller being portrayed as a heroic young girl who overcame deafness and blindness while the textbooks generally ignored her later career as a radical feminist and socialist and made her seem “uncontroversial and one-dimensional”

(Loewen, p. 35). Interestingly, Goebbels knew all this about her, which is why her books were among the thousands that he had burned on the great bonfires in Berlin when the Nazis took power, a scene that shocked the world at that time. Another example of heroification was Christopher Columbus, with textbooks describing his famous 1492 voyage while completely ignoring his time as governor of Santo Domingo, where millions of Taino Indians were enslaved, exterminated or wiped out in epidemics (Loewen, p. 45). Goebbels knew all about the atrocities of the Nazi regime, including the extermination of the Jews, slave labor, concentration camps and mass murder in Poland and Russia. Not only did he know about all this, but he encouraged and supported it in every possible way, and used his propaganda machine to justify these crimes. Unlike the case of Columbus, though, the history books generally discuss all this in great detail when they describe the Nazi regime and his role in it.

Very few scholars in history and the social sciences praise Dr. Goebbels and the Nazi Party or try to cover up the crimes of the regime. They recognize that he had a great talent for propaganda and manipulation of the masses, and for organizing the Germany media and culture to support the Nazi state, but all of these were employed for strictly negative ends: conquest, wars or aggression and genocide. It was the propaganda machine of Goebbels that played a large part in destroying democracy in Germany before 1933, and encouraging murderous hatred of the Jews, Slavs and other ‘non-Aryans’. Even during the Second World War, Goebbels constantly urged the German people to make greater sacrifices and fight to the death, even when he knew perfectly well that the war was lost. As a person, he is often described not as

a ‘hero’ but a corrupt and cynical manipulator who sold the Nazi ‘brand’ like detergent or toothpaste and turned Hitler into a messiah-figure, even though he often sneered at his own propaganda and the low intelligence of the masses. He was an intellectual who had contempt for rationality and believed that most people could be easily swayed by simple slogans, fears and hatreds. To a frightening degree, he was proved right in that conviction, but it has hardly made him a subject for heroification in history.

Analysis of Joseph Goebbels

For anyone who believes in democracy and human rights, it would be impossible to turn a man like Joseph Goebbels into a hero, not unless they secretly admire Nazism and its policies that led to tens of millions of deaths. It was one of the most murderous regimes in human history and Goebbels played a key role in bringing it to power and supporting all of its crimes and atrocities. Most people in the Western democracies regard him as one of the great villains of history, as an evil genius who used his talents to bring misery and destruction upon the world. Of all people, he understood that Nazism was not a rational ideology or party platform, but an emotional experience that is best understood by its “propagandist stage management” (Fest, 1999, p. 83). Goebbels was the producer, director and stage manager who sold Nazism to the German people with its banners, marches, songs, films and radio speeches all aimed at a mass audience. He even learned to appreciate the future potential of television, although this was not yet available on a mass scale in Germany before the Second World War began in 1939. During the Weimar Republic, particularly after the beginning of the Great Depression, he demonized the Jews and opposition parties while

turning Hitler into a mass media celebrity and Savior-figure for the German people. Although he idolized Hitler and turned Nazism into a substitute religion for the lost Catholic faith of his youth, he also had a deeply skeptical and cynical side, and “ nothing that his longing for faith could construct stood up to the probing of his inquisitional intelligence” (Fest, p. 86). One story about Goebbels has it that he once tossed a coin to decide if he would join the Nazi or the Communist Party, and throughout his career he took the socialist aspect of Nation Socialism very seriously. He always considered himself a radical and revolutionary who was alienated from the established social order and found non place in it. In part, his hatred of Jews stemmed from his belief that they had too large a role in the cultural and financial life of Germany and he tended to blame them for his lack of success as a writer just as Hitler blamed them for derailing his career as an artist in Vienna.

Initially at least, Goebbels thought that Hitler was too conservative and ‘ bourgeois’ to lead the new Nazi movement but by 1926 he had become personally very devoted to the Fuehrer. Hitler rewarded his loyalty with the appointment as Party leader (Gauleiter) in Berlin, and he remained in that position until his suicide in 1945. At that time, the Nazi Party was tiny and disorganized in Berlin, while the socialists and communists were dominant, but Goebbels was able to use propaganda very effectively to organize the masses there. Because of the demoralization of defeat in World War I and the collapse of the economy during the Great Depression, “ the German sense of security, community, and common decency was weakened” (Spielvogel and Redles, 2009, p. 295). Hitler’s Third Reich fill the vacuum left in the wake of this modern collapse, but the Nazi empire in the end had no “

redeeming values” and only offered the “ constant repetition of inhumane acts” (Spielvogel and Redles, p. 295). Like all Nazis, he openly proclaimed that his goal was to destroy the Weimar Republic, and he constantly mocked, demeaned and berated its leaders in speeches, posters and his own newspaper *Der Angriff* (Attack). Throughout his career, Goebbels was utterly ruthless and amoral in appealing to the fears, resentments and hatreds of the masses and stated that “ propaganda has absolutely nothing to do with truth” (Fest, p. 91). He turned a Nazi street thug named Horst Wessel into a great Nazi hero and martyr, and in fact no one in history ever had a better understanding of the process of heroification. That Weesel had been killed by another man in a fight over a prostitute meant nothing to Goebbels, who found him far more useful in death than he had ever been in life, and made the Horst Wessel Song the anthem of the Nazi Party (Fest, p. 92).

Hitler rewarded Goebbels for his efforts by naming him Minister of Propaganda and Public Enlightenment in March 1933, and he remained in this position until his death in 1945. Goebbels had an instinctive understanding that “ the very essence of totalitarian government lies in its combination of propaganda and terrorism” and the Nazi regime used both with great effectiveness (Fest, p. 93). In the glory years of Nazism, “ women and young people, in particular, were apparently enthusiastic about the new regime” and about Hitler, while Nazi organizations dominated all professional, labor and community life, leaving those who were “ disaffected with the regime isolated and ineffective” (Sax and Kuntz, 1991, p. 516). Through the Reich Chamber of Culture, Goebbels rapidly brought the mass media of Germany under his personal control, including radio, movies,

theater, newspapers, book publishing, music and the arts. As the chief producer and director of the Third Reich, Goebbels literally reviewed all the scripts, performances, and exhibitions, and no one worked in these professions without his approval. All Jews and persons considered politically unreliable were removed from the media and cultural life of Germany as if they had never existed, while those who were enthusiastic for the Nazi regime like the documentary filmmaker Leni Riefenstahl and the actor Emil Jannings found that their careers prospered. In addition, the Nazi state also purchased the loyalty of artists, performers and mass media figures through regular pensions and stipends (Cuomo, 1995, p. 2).

In the war years, the influence of Goebbels increased even more as his propaganda machine celebrated all the early triumphs of the Blitzkrieg in 1939-41, and then called on the German people to wage total war and fight to the death after the tide turned in 1942-43. As Goebbels stated in 1943 “we shall down in history as the greatest statesmen of all time, or as the greatest criminals”, and history has of course judged them to be the latter (Fest, p. 97). More and more, as Hitler went into seclusion, Goebbels became the public face of the Nazi state, appearing at the front and in bombed out cities while Hitler sought to avoid any public association with defeat and mass destruction of the country. Even when the Russians had Berlin surrounded in April 1945, Goebbels was still urging the masses forward to fight to the death and promising total victory, even when he fully realized that the war was lost. In the end, he decided that he simply did not wish to exist at all in a world without Hitler, and had he been taken enough the Allies would have undoubtedly tried and executed him as a major war criminal.

Instead Goebbels and his wife Madga committed suicide, after first poisoning their five small children, which could hardly be considered a heroic end by any sane person.

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