

**Background:** This article was published in *Das Reich* on 8 April 1945, one of the last of Joseph Goebbels's lead articles. The war situation was desperate, and Goebbels had nothing new or promising to say. He repeated familiar arguments, and even discussed the fact that significant numbers of Germans were losing hope, something he had rarely done before. His argument is that the Allies are in as bad a shape as Germany, also at the end of their resources, and if Germany can just hold out a little longer, the enemy will collapse.

**The source:** "Kämpfer für das ewige Reich ," *Das Reich*, 8 April 1945.

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## Fighters for the Eternal Reich

by Joseph Goebbels

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Under the fury of the enemy offensives that have been pressing down on our fronts to the west, east, and south for months, as well as the almost unceasing bombing of our German cities and provinces, some hearts are beginning to shake and tremble. Rarely in history has a brave people struggling for its life faced such terrible tests as the German people have in this war. The misery that results for us all, the never ending chain of sorrows, fears, and spiritual torture does not need to be described in detail. We know them all too well, and we are too proud to appeal to the world's pity. We are bearing a heavy fate because we are fighting for a good cause, and are called to bravely endure the battle to achieve greatness. This faith is the sure foundation that remains to us in the midst of this inferno of self destruction under which all humanity moans and weeps. That is why we cling so strongly to it, for if we lost it, we ourselves would also be lost.

It may be a consolation for experienced hearts to know that this sorrow will end, as do all of earth's sorrows. The question is how that end will come. A happy outcome for us depends wholly and exclusively on ourselves. We must earn it. Just as we have done again and again in such admirable ways in the earlier stages of this terrible war, our goal must be not to lack those proven virtues of war in the final phase of this gigantic battle between peoples. The darkest hour is the one before sunrise. The stars that lent their soft light have already set, and the deepest darkness precedes the dawn. No one needs to fear that it will forget to come. The dark veil of night will suddenly fall and the sun will rise in the blood-red sky. As it is in nature, so to it is in the lives of peoples and nations, particularly during war, which is the most terrible natural event among peoples and nations. Have confidence and wait until that hour comes!

Still, it is not enough to believe. One must also work and fight, each at his place and to the best of his abilities. It is understandable that many of us, in the face of the setbacks that we have suffered in the past two years, think about how it all happened, or whether or not this or that could have been avoided, but such thoughts may not be allowed to overpower us. We must face fate bravely, and may never lose the faith that we are forced to fight for a great and just cause, and that victory will be ours if we press on. It would be wrong to look for a scapegoat at this moment. Our enemies are responsible. They do not like our state, our modern social system, and our new forms of community because they see in them a danger for their reactionary system of world exploitation. These enemies therefore deserve our hatred and our accusations. The battle that we have to wage can be won only with full national unity and determination. That is the command of the hour.

The general world crisis we experience is assuming ever more terrible forms, and not only for us, but also for the rest of Europe, and of course for the enemy states. As even English and American

newspapers have to admit, well over half of our continent is starving. Far-reaching political consequences result from that, which seem likely to throw the enemy camp into ever greater confusion. They have to win quickly if they are to win at all. That explains their so often repeated appeals on us to lay down our weapons and give up the battle. But for us, that is only one more reason to ignore these cynical appeals so that the latent crisis they face, and that seems so dangerous to them, will reach its peak. It is naive to believe that they can carry on the war as long as they want to, given their material superiority. Like us, they have strained their war potential to the utmost, and exhausted it. Such a test of strength can only last for a certain while. It depends on who first loses his nerve and gives up. He will lose the war, and bear all the fateful consequences.

That is no cheap excuse to console weak spirits. One need only read our enemy's press for a few days to get a picture of the confusion in their camp. There is not a single world problem on which they agree. The only point on which they agree is that the German Reich must be destroyed and the German people wiped out. But even on this matter they have fundamentally different plans, and each hopes to tear as much booty as possible from the hands of the other. No one will want to say that these devilish plans need to be realized in order to make humanity happy. The craziest nonsense has become their war goals, and were they to have free reign, not only our people, but the whole world would be plunged into the most terrible misery. That explains the natural boundaries that we must see, and therefore our call for the steady continuation of the battle for our freedom. Humanity is in the midst of a hard and tragic crisis, but that will not destroy it, any more than our people will be defeated because it must master hard fate and deadly danger.

This crisis follows its own laws, which will only be accelerated as the war continues. If they continue, or even intensify, they will one day overcome our enemies, assuming, of course, that they do not succeed in overcoming them for a short period by splitting the booty of the German Reich. That, therefore, must be prevented at all costs, using our whole national strength. That is the center of our war efforts up until the final decisive hour. That is how historic crises have always been mastered. To view the present state of the war exclusively from the military standpoint would be to display a complete lack of historic judgment. That is an important, but not the only important, factor. There are also national, political, social, and economic elements which are of ever growing significance, and which will one day assume equal importance. We must keep an eye on them as well, which they deserve more than ever.

The leading German military virtue is steadfastness, and that applies to the working and suffering homeland as well as to the fighting front. We realize that we are repeating something that has often been said. However, a truth is no less valid because it is expressed daily. We also realize that the toughness of our battle and military leadership in the midst of a growing crisis arouses resistance, a kind of lethargy, from soft and weak characters, weariness and apathy from those particularly hard hit by the war, doubts and hopelessness in unbelieving hearts, those worn out by the hardness of the age. We do not want to take any steps against them as long as they do their duty and attempt to replace their lack of courage with at least a certain degree of outward behavior. There will always be weaklings who cannot wait for the coming decision, and who in fear would like to commit suicide. Strong and courageous fanatics must face them. They must lead them back to the right path, and depending on the situation and opportunities, call them to order with an educational or firm or commanding word. We all bear a multitude of sorrows, but no one may misuse them to bring down an even worse misery on our whole people. That applies to each individual, even under the most tragic circumstances.

We must face such uncertainty in a hard and unsentimental way. Most of the time, it is not those who have suffered the most in the war who claim the right to complain the loudest. They quietly do their duty, thinking of their beloved dead who sacrificed for the fatherland, and who must not have died in vain. Most of those who speak up have the least cause to do so, and they above all deserve a firm

rebuke. Most of the time, they do not know what they are doing, and what would happen if people listened to them. They are like a drowning man who grips his rescuer so firmly that both risk going under. He who has kept his head may use any means to save himself and the one he is rescuing. We who stand for the eternal idea of the Reich have a similar task today. We have sworn an oath to the Führer and our cause. We must give the weak and the wavering an example, extending to them material and, even more importantly, spiritual support, if necessary with hard and firm words that will send them back to their daily work, not making the mistake of accepting their weakness and therefore increasing it.

Hard times need hard people. Our age is the hardest that mortal men have ever had to face. We have faced setback after setback, but that is no reason to resign and let things take their course. They will not give up if we give up. We face bloodthirsty and revenge-seeking enemies who want to realize their devilish threats if we give them the chance. No one may deceive himself about that. One side wants to deal with the German people through executions and deportations to Siberia, the other to decimate and exterminate us through terror and starvation. It would be foolish to believe it will not be all that bad. It would be even worse than that, should we give it a chance. We therefore consider it our national duty to warn against the danger, and to repeat it even if it becomes boring over time, to make our people aware of an alternative more threatening than ever before that stands before us. When the burdens of this war are finally taken from us, we will devote ourselves to the new tasks of peace. But as long as they rest on our shoulders, we all have but one command: to resist the enemy with silent determination, to resist at any price, not to waver or grow weak, and to hold the flag of our faith all the more firmly the more it is threatened, the more tattered that holy banner flies through the storms.

Only that is worthy of our people and its leadership at the present stage of the war. And the world expects that of us, although it may say the opposite a thousand times. We have faced too many crises in our lives not to know how they begin, how they develop, but also how they end. It always depends on strong hearts. When the skies darken, when lightning bolt after lightning bolt flashes from the threatening clouds, that is the time to put away fear and face the elements in a proud and manly way, standing upright until the first specks of blue show up on the horizon, announcing the ruling sun that slowly breaks through the clouds. Those who tremble during the storm will deny it when the sun shines over them. Why? Because they are ashamed of their fear, which ripped the mask from their faces and revealed their human contemptibleness.

We, however, will have nothing to explain or to regret. We have proved in danger that our loyalty to the fatherland and the Führer was genuine. We did what we promised. Neither good fortune nor ill fortune changed us; we remained what we always were, and what we will remain until death calls us: fighters for the eternal Reich of the Germans, which has withstood the storms of two millennia, and which has been so hardened in this war that it will be able to withstand the storms of two more millennia. In good times, we stood by its side with festivals and songs. In hard times, our hands and our hearts, and if need be our lives, belong to it.