

Background: The German offensive in the West was going well, though France had not yet completely collapsed. Goebbels, however, is clearly confident. This article is dated 2 June 1940, and appeared originally published as the lead in *Das Reich*, a prestige weekly.

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Missed Opportunities

by Joseph Goebbels

In Germany people say that the Führer is always right. Abroad, one says he is always lucky. That is only partly true. The Führer has earned his luck. He makes it easy for fate to help him. He acts according to the principle that in politics one must always be ready to take advantage of an opportunity. There is nothing more contemptible than a statesman who fails to rise to an opportunity. The Führer's enemies practically fall into his hands. That is proof that they are chosen by fate to collapse. A tired and exhausted world declines not only because of its weaknesses, but above all because of its mistakes, its illusions, its faulty sense of reality, and its missed opportunities. It confirms the truth of the proverb: "God makes blind those whom he wishes to punish." The entire history of National Socialism and its enemies is further proof.

On 14 September 1930, for example, the Führer won his first great electoral victory. The NSDAP won 107 seats in the German Reichstag. The democratic republic faced two choices: to recognize the Führer or to destroy him. The first would have been reasonable and logical, the second difficult but not impossible. The republic did neither. They watched things happen like the rabbit views a snake, giving themselves up to their fate. Only when it was too late, they founded the Iron Front. Only after the National Socialist movement was too big to be stopped by force did the republic try that means, and only when he was the man of the hour did it condescend to take him seriously. The last chance came on 13 August 1932. Once more they missed it, and gave the Führer the time he needed to prepare for National Socialism's final victory over the parliamentary resistance. This missed opportunity cost the democratic republic its life.

The same story repeated itself in the international arena after the take over. The right day for France and Germany to have taken on the National Socialist movement and the resulting National Socialist state would have been 30 January 1933, or 31 January at the latest.

The Western European plutocrats had two choices: they had either to destroy this new Germany immediately, or to seek a lasting peace with it. The first was at the time still possible, the second would have meant some sacrifice, but nothing all that expensive. It would also have been reasonable and logical. Neither happened. Once again the enemy fell into illusions that did not hurt Germany, but robbed its enemies of sound human judgment.

Our departure from the League of Nations gave our enemies abroad a new, though more difficult, opportunity. They either should have declared war or made peace. Again, they did neither. Again they were hypnotized like the rabbit in front of the snake. They hoped for a German revolution and were so blind that they failed even to study the National Socialist movement, though they knew that it wanted to change the entire balance of power in Europe.

They complained about the introduction of universal military service, but did nothing. They responded to the occupation of the Rhineland with empty threats, but did nothing. There was but a single attempt by the enemy to find a midrange solution: the naval agreement with England. Even that was neutralized

through the infamous incitement to war that came from London, which destroyed any possible positive effects of that treaty.

Schuschnigg, for example had the opportunity to be the savior of Austria and the father of the *Anschluss* — the Führer showed him how. Instead, he missed the opportunity and depended on England's protection. At the critical hour, he stood alone. It is almost tragi-comic to see how the Führer's enemies always make the wrong choice. Benesch was in a position to resolve the crisis early on by granting partial autonomy to the Sudeten Germans, which would have removed any grounds for attack on the part of the Reich. He waited too long, made his compromises too late, and like all his predecessors had to pay for it in the end. Beck and Rydz-Smigly could have come to terms with Germany. They only needed to return Danzig to the Reich and accept a small corridor through their corridor. One can hardly imagine that such a step could have saved Poland a year ago. But the men in Warsaw lamented the situation and depended on England, and the temporary Polish state fell in 18 days.

One may say that history is there to teach us lessons! After the experiences of the past three years, one begins to doubt it. Those who opposed the National Socialist movement or the National Socialist state had the ambition to try it themselves, and each paid a high price. We are not even referring to the deafening shouts of enemy propaganda, so embarrassingly stupid that we consider it beneath our dignity to pay any heed to it. But the enemy always had statesmen whose job it really should have been to think more clearly, to consider the real facts of the situation, and avoid expending their wisdom only in well-paid newspaper articles. Even in October of last year, and at the height of his military triumphs of the Polish campaign, the Führer gave his famous speech to the Reichstag in which he offered London and Paris a reasonable and inexpensive peace.

What kind of devil was leading the West European plutocrats to mockingly reject his offer instead of eagerly accepting it! A foreign newspaper wrote a few days ago that if this offer were repeated in its original form, all those money bags in London would eagerly accept it. But if they worked for war with all their strength, why did they not at least prepare for it with all their strength as well?

People often ask: What are Churchill, Chamberlain, and Reynaud really thinking? My answer: About nothing at all. They are thinking just as little as Scheidemann and Braun and Brüning did in their day. They are possessed by such a proud and arrogant superiority complex that they do not believe they have to think at all. Were I English or French, I would be desperately asking what my government had done during the five hard months of winter. The answer has to be: Nothing at all, other than finding cheap victories on paper, fabricating lies and slanders, and urging the hated Germans to start a revolution. That revolution would bring defeat and the partition of the Reich. It would mean the return of a political gigolo like Otto Hapsburg as King of Austria, the loss of the Rhine and Ruhr to France, and Pommeria, Sillesia, and Brandenburg to Poland. The Germans would have to be pleased to eat their meals in French field kitchens at the points of bayonets.

What a delight!

Now our western offensive breaks loose on these plutocrats. They told their soldiers that they needed only to wait at the Maginot Line and hang their washing on the Siefried Line. Now they must send those soldiers into hard and bloody combat.

If one believed the speeches these statesmen gave in the past, one would have to think that they would be delighted with the state of things. They have the war they wanted. Yet they are suddenly yammering that we attacked them. That is not what they wanted. They were thinking of a bloodless war in which German soldiers would not fight, but rather German women and children would starve. Their plan has suddenly collapsed. They sit in their churches and pray. They hypocritically call upon God as their ally, and beg the rest of the world to pull their chestnuts out of the fire and to cool down the soup they have

cooked. They hypocritically complain about the fate they have brought upon themselves, and in the same breath invite others to join them.

What can one say to these intellectual athletes and their absolutely crazy proclamations? They do not grow weary of filling the air with their loud cries for help. They remain impudent, superior, stupid and cowardly, small tradesman of politics, who were foolish enough to take on a historical genius who once said he could not forgive fate for giving him only nonentities as opponents.

Is anyone left who will ask for London's protection? The refusals come from every direction on the compass. And what shall we do with the talkative old gentlemen in London and Paris who, like our former domestic opponents, missed every opportunity and have suddenly begun to talk a bit more quietly? The best thing to do would be to leave them in the hands of their own people for their just reward. Once they realize the scale of the coming catastrophe, they will know what to do with statesmen who have been weighed and found wanting.

History will remember them as gravediggers of a rotten and weary world. One must only give a shove and it will collapse.