



Volume 7. Nazi Germany, 1933-1945
Goebbels's New Propaganda Guidelines (June 22, 1941)

Goebbels's ministry had already been steering both the content and the style of German newspapers since 1933, when it started holding daily press conferences to establish a preliminary layer of censorship. With the outbreak of war, state control of the press intensified dramatically. More so than ever before, reporting became an instrument of propaganda. Goebbels's new propaganda guidelines of June 22, 1941 – the day the invasion of Russia was launched – make clear that reporting was to interpret the realities of war in ideological terms and put a positive spin on them.

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Daily Watchword of the Reich Press Chief.

The criminal double crossing policy of the Bolsheviks, which provoked the overwhelming deployment of the million-strong German army from the North Cape to the Black Sea must be made the subject of comprehensive coverage by the German press during the next few days, through which the meaning and the historical importance of this struggle will be clearly outlined to the German people on the basis of the Führer's proclamation, the particular points made by the Reich Press Chief and other material.

[. . .]

We are clear about what the outcome of the struggle will be. It can only end with a victory for German arms. The press now has the decisive task of guiding the hearts and feelings of the homeland in such a way that those at the front can once more rely on those at home. This work of the German press is of decisive importance because until now for military operational reasons the German people has not been mentally prepared for this change of course.

[. . .]

At the moment the German people have two things on their minds:

(a) How can the war with the Soviet Union be reconciled with the hopes for a speedy end to the war?

(b) After years of struggle against Bolshevism we made a pact with the Soviet Union. How could it come to this second change of course?

[regarding] (a) The most important argument in this connection is to emphasize the fact that the German armed forces could not be fully committed in the West so long as there was a power which was a treacherous unknown quantity in the East. The way this argument is handled will be decisive for the psychological attitude of the whole German nation in this struggle and it must, therefore, be well articulated.

[regarding] (b) In this connection it must be made clear that this is not just a simple shift in policy. National Socialism began as a movement against Bolshevism. Under this banner it conquered the Reich and re-founded it. After the fulfillment of these tasks for the Reich the struggle against Bolshevism was postponed for two years through an apparent truce. As a result of the treachery of the Bolshevik leaders, which has been uncovered by the Führer, National Socialism, and therefore the German nation, is returning to the principle on the basis of which it began, namely the struggle against plutocracy and Bolshevism.

[. . .]

Source of English translation: Jeremy Noakes, ed., *Nazism, 1919-1945*, Vol. 4: *The German Home Front in World War II*. Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 1998, pp. 474-75. (With some small additions by GHI staff.)

Source of original German text: Bundesarchiv Berlin, Sammlung Brammer, ZSlg. 101/20.