



Volume 7. Nazi Germany, 1933-1945
Goebbels's Call for Retribution (June 5, 1943)

To preserve the general population's willingness to fight, Hitler had long resisted total war. Above all, everyday material life on the home front was not to be compromised. But the course of the war after the German defeat at Stalingrad made it absolutely necessary for Hitler to exploit all of the material and human resources at his disposal. In turn, propaganda was essential to maintain public trust and ensure citizens' ongoing willingness to make sacrifices. The propaganda strategy for the home front is exemplified by the following excerpt from Goebbels's speech at a Nazi party rally at the Berlin *Sportpalast* on June 5, 1943. The Allies' strategic aerial warfare meant that the civilian population of the home front had already been pulled into the war in 1942, but after Great Britain and the U.S. settled upon a joint concept for a strategic bombing war in 1943, the situation of the general population worsened considerably.

[...]

So if we at home have to make sacrifices in *this* war, at least we know *what they're for*. In so far as food is concerned, however, it seems to me that they are bearable in comparison with the sacrifices which the population in the areas hit by air raids have had to make almost *night after night* for the past *weeks* and *months*. [Applause] Our enemies are attacking their goods and belongings and their lives with *brutal cynicism* in an attempt to wear down their morale. They even *admit it quite openly*. It will be to their *eternal shame* that in this attempt they have destroyed German cultural treasures. But they want to do more. They are waging war against the *morale* of our nation; they are killing civilians, *old people, women and children*, and are barely trying any longer to cover their infamous bloody terror with a cloak of humanity. A few days ago, the Church of England stated hypocritically that English bombs no longer discriminate between men, women and children. [Booing] This statement seems, however, almost too meek when compared with the infernal outbursts of *hatred and triumph* which can be found in the London *Jew* papers.

We present-day Germans are not the kind of people who seek indulgence from an enemy who is out to destroy us. We know that against British-US bomb terror there is only one effective *remedy: counter-terror*. [Applause] Today there is but one thought in the minds of the whole of the German people: *to repay the enemy in his own kind*. [Applause] Far be it from us to boast or threaten. We merely take note. *Every English comment today* which considers the bombing of German women, old people and children an entirely humane or even Christian method of conquering the German nation *will one day be a welcome argument in our reply to these villainies*. [Applause] The British people have no cause to triumph. They will have to pay for the

bill marked up by its leaders by order of those Jews who instigated and spurred them into their bloody crimes.

Until then we must try to put up with the consequences of the British-American air terror which are at times very hard. [. . .]

The enemy can make dust and ashes of our houses; but this makes the hearts of our population burn with *hatred*, but not to burn to ashes. *One day the hour of retribution [Vergeltung] will come.* [. . .]

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, p. 500.

Source of original German text: *Völkischer Beobachter*, June 6, 1943; reprinted in Helmut Heiber, ed., *Goebbels Reden 1932-1945*. Bindlach: Grondom Verlag, 1991, pp. 225-28.