

GOEBBELS ON PROPAGANDA

The decree establishing a 'Reich Ministry of Popular Enlightenment and Propaganda' came into law on 13 March 1933. Joseph Goebbels outlined his view of the role of the new Ministry at his first press conference on 15 March 1933.

I see in the setting up of the new Ministry of Popular Enlightenment and Propaganda by the Government a revolutionary act in so far as the new Government no longer intends to leave the people to their own devices. [...] In the newly-established Ministry of Popular Enlightenment and Propaganda I envisage the link between regime and people, the living contact between the national government, as the expression of the people's will, and the people themselves. In the past few weeks we have seen an increasing coordination between Reich policy and the policy of the states, and in the same way I view the first task of the new Ministry as being to establish coordination between the Government and the whole people. If this government is determined never and under no circumstances to give way, then it has no need of the lifeless power of the bayonet, and in the long run will not be content with 52 per cent behind it and with terrorizing the remaining 48 per cent, but will see its most immediate task as being to win over that remaining 48 per cent. [...]

It is not enough for people to be more or less reconciled to our regime, to be persuaded to adopt a neutral attitude towards us, rather we want to work on people until they have capitulated to us, until they grasp ideologically that what is happening in Germany today not only must be accepted but also can be accepted.

Propaganda is not an end in itself, but a means to an end. [...] The aim of our movement was to mobilize people, to organize people, to win them for the national revolutionary ideal. This aim—even the most hostile person cannot dispute this—has been achieved and that represents the verdict on our propaganda methods. The new Ministry has no other aim than to unite the nation behind the ideal of the national revolution. If the aim has been achieved then people can pronounce judgment on my methods if they wish; that would be a matter of complete indifference for the Ministry would then by its efforts have achieved its goal. If, however, the aim is not achieved then although I might be able to prove that my propaganda methods satisfied all the laws of aesthetics I would have done better to become a theatre producer or the director of an Academy of Art not the Minister of a Ministry of Popular Enlightenment and Propaganda [...].

The most important tasks of this Ministry must be the following: first, all propaganda ventures and all institutions of public information belonging to the Reich and the states must be centralized in one hand. Furthermore, it must be our task to instil into these propaganda facilities a modern feeling and bring them up to date. We must not allow technology to run ahead of the Reich but rather the Reich must keep pace with technology. Only the latest thing is good enough. We are living in an age when policies must have mass support [...] the leaders of today must be modern princes of the people, they must be able to understand the people but need not follow them slavishly. It is their duty to tell the masses what they want and put it across to the masses in such a way that they understand it too [...].