

# PATHFINDER

October 29, 1938: p. 5

## PRESENTING

### Joseph Goebbels

This week, from the North Sea sand dunes to the hills of newly annexed Sudetenland, 76,000,000 Germans celebrate the birthday of a man whom most of them vaguely dislike and many of them actively hate and fear. Every German radio station will broadcast his biography; every German newspaper will print a congratulatory editorial—and with good reason. Dr. Paul Joseph Goebbels, Minister of Propaganda and Public Enlightenment, could make life extremely unpleasant for any German editor or announcer who failed to congratulate him on his 41st birthday.

Nowhere were birthday banners more conspicuous than in the factory city of Rheydt in "Germany's steel heart," the smoky, industrial Ruhr. There, on Oct. 29, 1897, a wizened baby with a club foot was born to a factory foreman and a blacksmith's daughter. The baby grew into a lame boy whose black eyes glittered in a head that seemed too big for his frail shoulders. Little Joseph Goebbels (pronounced *Gur-bulls*) could not run as fast as other boys. Instead of running, therefore, he read. In his queer big head ambition grew.

When other 17-year-old German boys went to the trenches in 1914, Goebbels went to college. Rejected for military service because of his deformity, he drifted from one university to another. At the seventh stop, Heidelberg, he finally won his doctorate of philosophy in 1921, coming off with high honors. Meanwhile he read Karl Marx and listened to Socialist soapbox speeches.

Germany at that time was seething with revolution. Child of the factory, Goebbels might have been a Communist if French troops had not occupied the Ruhr. That occupation humiliated the German people and convinced many workers that putting their faith in the "workers of the world" would lead only to betrayal. Goebbels, guessing that one day the hurt pride of the nation would turn to a new nationalism, foresaw that such a movement would be a magnificent tool for ambition. In 1922, he learned of the National Socialist German Workers' Party of Munich and its leader, Adolf Hitler, a hack painter who was regarded locally as a crackpot. Goebbels had found his tool.

To the struggling Nazi party, Goebbels brought a genius for the organization of propaganda. Supporting himself by running a cheap Berlin journal, *Die Voelkische Freiheit*, he wormed his way upward, slippery as Satan. None of his colleagues trusted him—"he is the Mephistopheles of the party," they said—but all respected his ability.

From the beginning Goebbels was

[OldMagazineArticles.com](http://OldMagazineArticles.com)

## G O E B B E L S



*Goebbels Once Made His Wife a "Dictator"* bound to Hitler by hate and love. He envied the Fuehrer's leadership. At the same time he admired Hitler and divined that the best way to further his own ambition would be to promote Hitler's.

Because he is the best-educated of Hitler's lieutenants, Goebbels is often called "Hitler's one-man brain trust." Hitler, Field Marshal Hermann Goering, and Goebbels—Nazis One, Two, and Three—are referred to respectively as "the Mouth, the Muscle, and the Mind." This is an over-simplification of their true role. Goering butchered and Goebbels scribbled the Nazi party to success, but the idea man behind both has always been Hitler. It was Hitler who, plumbing the deepest currents of German opinion, brought to the surface the idea that Jews and Socialists "sapping the front line" had turned Germany's shining World war victory into shameful defeat. Goebbels took the idea and soaked it into the German mass mind with his newspaper, *Der Angriff*.

Press-agent extraordinary, Goebbels is the creator of the Hitler legend. He is also the whitewasher of the Nazi reputation. In the 1920s the party had an unsavory name because its ranks included a clique of homosexuals. As early as 1922 a Nazi meeting at Munich voted that no woman should ever hold political office. Goebbels twisted the party's abnormal dislike of women into something "respectable"—the doctrine that woman's place is in the kitchen and the maternity ward. In 1934 he had the brilliant idea of attributing the blood purge to moral reasons. Ernst Roehm, leader of the secret opposition to Hitler, happened to be a homosexual. Goebbels managed to convey to the German people the belief that Roehm was murdered because of his morals.

Goebbels himself married young and happily. Magda Goebbels, blonde and lovely, was a German refugee who fled from Belgium to Berlin during the war, and was brought up by a Jewish family. Goebbels is her second husband. Once, he set up his wife as fashion dictator for all Germany

## G O E B B E L S

but after three months the position was quietly eliminated from the Nazi scheme of things.

She has borne him two blonde daughters. The affection of Goebbels' little girls for their "uncle Adolf" is popularly supposed to be one factor that keeps the Minister of Propaganda in the Fuehrer's favor.

Politically prominent after 1926, Goebbels was elected to the Reichstag in 1928 and named party propaganda chief in 1929. When he rose to power with Hitler in 1933 he was 36—Hitler's junior by eight years, Goering's by four, and the youngest man ever to have been named to a German cabinet post. He set about instantly bringing the press, radio, theater and cinema under his control.

Under Goebbels' direction, German newspapers have become dull but, for foreign state departments, required reading. The Nazi press onslaught on Czechoslovakia was plotted as carefully as a military campaign. Headlines which snarled, "Germany Has Waited Long Enough," played no little part in scaring Britain and France into awarding Sudetenland to the Reich. Last week the German press was blossoming with a campaign to persuade Britain that she should accept aerial inferiority to Germany, as Germany has accepted naval inferiority to Britain. "I can play upon public opinion," boasts Dr. Goebbels, "as upon the stops of a mighty organ."

As an orator he is second only to Hitler. Millions of Americans heard his high, rather piping voice introduce the Fuehrer at the Sept. 12 party congress at Nuremberg. On that occasion Goebbels said, "Germany is behind Hitler as one man." He said it over and over again, varying the words but not the thought. Repetition is the secret of his technique. "Hate the Jews!" "Value a common prostitute above a married Jewess!"—his slogans bombard the German intelligence.

With only one segment of the population is Goebbels popular. Economic radical and son of the Ruhr, he knows the phrases that charm the proletariat. "Stand up, you young aristocrats of a new working class! You are the aristocrats of the Third Reich!" he shouted to Berlin workmen in the 1920s. Whatever following Hitler has among factory workers—the class which profited least from the Nazi revolution—is due to Goebbels. Other Germans are suspicious of the little lame man with the glittering, un-Aryan eyes and swart skin. "The dwarf is born of the devil," they grumble. "No honest German could be so clever."

So they whisper, in private, but they celebrate Goebbels' birthday. The Minister of Propaganda can make life very disagreeable for people who fail to congratulate him on becoming 41.