

## Goebbels, Joseph

(1897--1945), Nazi Minister of Propaganda.

Goebbels was born in the Rheydt, Germany, to a poor, religious Catholic family. Due to his clubfoot, Goebbels was unable to serve in World War I. Instead he earned a doctorate in literature and philosophy, hoping to become a writer. He was partly able to fulfill his aspirations by joining the Nazis in 1924 and editing a party journal.

Soon, Goebbels gained a reputation as a dynamic speaker and propagandist. In 1926 he was made district Party leader of Berlin - his assignment was to win over the capital for the Party. In 1928, Goebbels became the Party's chief of propaganda, and it was he who coordinated the Nazis' election campaign bringing Hitler to national power in January 1933.

In March 1933, Goebbels was made Minister of Propaganda and Public Information. His goal was to "Nazify" the art and culture of Germany. Accordingly, he ordered all "un-German" books burnt on May 10, 1933. Goebbels used radio and propaganda films to win over supporters. He was also responsible for creating a cult of personality for Hitler. In November 1938, it was Goebbels' idea to exploit the murder of a German diplomat in France, by a Jewish youth (Herschel Grynszpan), in order to stage a violent pogrom against the Jews of Germany. He gave this violent outburst its cynical name *Kristallnacht*.

During the war, Goebbels directed the Nazis' psychological warfare propaganda campaign. He turned the German population against their "enemies" by creating and spreading lies and hatred. Depicting the Jews as sub-human creatures who were the Germans' greatest enemies. Goebbels thought that people would only believe lies if they were repeated often enough, and that the bigger the lie, the greater the chance it would be believed.

Despite the fact that Goebbels was an adoring admirer of Adolf Hitler, Hitler did not always return the admiration. Their relationship stabilized though, when Goebbels supported Hitler after a failed attempt on Hitler's life. As the

war was about to end, Hitler named Goebbels his successor, however Goebbels refused. The day after Hitler committed suicide in his bunker, Goebbels and his wife followed suit, after ordering the execution of their six children. Russian troops identified Goebbels' body several hours later. (see also Propaganda, Nazi.)