

lern restoration except his own. Bruening was rebuffed, the moment passed—possibly the last free moment for Germany.

It is seldom given to a man to destroy his country twice, yet that was the achievement of the well-meaning last Kaiser. His astute and able father, the unfortunate Kaiser Frederick William, would never have succumbed to the jingoistic naval rivalry with England, and he would certainly have avoided going to war in 1914. William blundered into that and the doom of his dynasty. In 1931 as an old man he might have saved his country from a far greater evil by renouncing his rights to his lost throne. Without this renunciation, Hindenburg, the creaky senile monarchist, would not accept the regency for Louis Ferdinand, the only tolerable Hohenzollern. And instead of King Log Germany received King Stork.

Reviewed by FRANCIS RUSSELL

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## *A Matter of Interpretation*

### **Final Entries 1945: The Diaries of Joseph**

**Goebbels**, edited, introduced, and annotated by Hugh Trevor-Roper, translated from the German by Richard Barry, *New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1978. xli + 368 pp. \$14.95.*

THIS VOLUME contains the last surviving part of the author's diaries, which he began in 1924, and covers the period from February 27 to April 9, 1945, with some entries missing, which are properly noted. Neither the author, the famous or infamous Dr. Joseph Goebbels, Minister for Propaganda and Public Enlightenment in National Socialist Germany, nor the editor, Professor Hugh Trevor-Roper, the eminent British historian of seventeenth-century England and of National Socialist Germany, is in need of any further introduction here. What is valuable to the reader is the editor's illuminating and analytical evaluation

of the character of Goebbels and his meaningful interpretation of the daily entries in the diary. Also helpful is the brief documentary history of Goebbels' diary presented by Peter Stadelmayer, which makes clear the authenticity of the diaries that Goebbels regarded "as his most valuable possession." The diary material published here comes from a microfilm copy originating in East Germany and is part of a large amount of material received by Hoffman and Campe, the publisher of the German edition, who now possesses copies of almost 16,000 pages of the diaries from the years 1924 to April 1945 as well as other written material from Goebbels' papers.

Stadelmayer points out that up to July 8, 1941, Goebbels wrote his diary entries in manuscript; that thereafter he dictated them to a stenographer; that each of the daily entries begins with the "Military Situation" presented every morning to a small group in Goebbels' study by the liaison officer from the High Command of the German Armed Forces; that the "Military Situation" paragraphs reproduced in this book were drafted by the liaison officer and the stenographer; and that Goebbels' dictated entries were never reviewed by him for publication, which explains many of the careless errors which otherwise he would have corrected.

Necessary for the reader also is an important note by the translator, indicating that, in the German edition, the date of dictation that was used produced some erroneous statements, and that, therefore, in this English language edition, the dates of the entries are those on which the events in question occurred, thus requiring the omission of the word "yesterday" from the "Military Situation" sub-headings and from the text.

Trevor-Roper's compact introductory essay, analyzing and delineating the character and personality of Goebbels from his own writings, from the writings of his biographers, and from other writings about him, such as those of Albert Speer and Alfred Rosenberg, and culminating in the interpretation of these *Final Entries*, is superb and should prove to be most helpful to readers who proceed to make their own interpretations and evaluations. Although

some readers will agree with the editor's analysis of the diary entries, others will disagree, given the infinite variety to which interpretation is subject. In many respects it depends on who is interpreting the thoughts of the diarist and what the conditions are that shape the diarist's thoughts at the time, as well as when the interpretation is being made and what the conditions are that shape the thoughts of the interpreter at that time.

The conditions shaping the thoughts of the diarist are those of the months of February, March, and April 1945, during which period the continuing destruction, invasion, and final defeat of National Socialist Germany by the Armed Forces of the Allied powers was to take place, while the German Armed Forces fought to prevent their defeat and while the civilian population struggled to survive. The conditions shaping the thoughts of interpreters are those experienced through the war years and the years since 1945, during which Hitler's Third Reich, and all that it represented, had been condemned as a "criminal" despotism. Other events of a catastrophic character—wars, revolutions, atrocities, and disasters of nature—have marked the years to the present.

Who then may be interpreters? A German National Socialist survivor of the war years? A German citizen of West Germany or of East Germany, who is of the older generation or the new? A foreigner of the younger generation? A foreign participant in the war who has survived, such as Trevor-Roper or this reviewer? It is a problem. (Has it not been said that "you can make anything you want out of a document"?)

In the last few pages of his introductory essay the editor concludes his interpretation of the diary with a number of observations too numerous to be cited here. Indicative of the whole, however, may be his observations that "Goebbels on every page is true to himself" and that

Here we see his opportunism, his radicalism, his nihilism, his hatred of humanity; but also his incredible mental energy, his unflinching flair for propaganda, and his personal courage. Most prominent of all, perhaps, is his passion for destruction.

This reviewer does not deny that these and other observations may be made from a study of

the diary, nor that there is any need for the editor "to summarize the dramatic history of those weeks or Goebbels' reactions to them." But quite apart from the value of the editor's introductory essay, the reports on the military situation and Goebbels' reactions to the events of those weeks do make up the essential and most valuable aspects of the diary and underline the reasons why it should be read, as tragic and depressing as it is.

The diary gives us an additional account of a people and a state fighting for survival against overwhelming odds; a people and a state in the process of being defeated and destroyed, their land overrun by hostile forces, their life snuffed out in chaos and death. The diary also confirms the rivalries and animosities of the National Socialist leaders (in this case Goebbels' denigration of Goering, Ribbentrop, and others) and discloses the hopes and fears, the illusions and fantasies of Goebbels, of Hitler, of Himmler, of Ribbentrop, and other leaders grasping for straws in defeat, as well as the stop-gap civilian and military measures to avoid it. The diary gives us the daily reactions of Goebbels to the domestic situation, to the military situation, and to the reports on the foreign political situation. It contains the substance of his many conversations (those with Hitler being especially significant) and of his continuous propaganda activity to counter the breakdown of morale by strengthening the people's hopes in some last minute miracle. It also gives us those apparently negative, or abnormal, components of Goebbels' personality, in part caused by the conditions of war, there being hardly anything normal about such conditions.

The editor has also annotated the diary so that persons mentioned in it are identified and listed in a name index. *Final Entries* includes a place index, a selection of photographs, a Gazetteer to identify the names of battle sites used by Goebbels and their 1977 equivalents, two outline maps, a detailed chronology from January 1 to August 2, 1945, and appendices, the most significant of which are the letters of Goebbels and his wife to Harold Quandt, dated April 28, 1945, and Goebbels' appendix to Adolph Hitler's Will and Testament, dated

April 29, 1945, indicating not only their loyalty to Hitler and Germany but also their suicidal intentions, which were carried out. Thus the reader of the diary is richly aided as he makes his own interpretation and evaluation of Goebbels and his account of the last days of National Socialist Germany.

Reviewed by HENRY M. ADAMS