

**Background:** In this article dated 25 March 1939, Goebbels goes after England. A few weeks earlier, Germany had marched into Czechoslovakia. Goebbels is annoyed that the English are unhappy about it. In typical Goebbels style, he accuses the English of doing in the past what Germany is doing in the present.

**The source:** "Die Moral der Reichen," *Die Zeit ohne Beispiel* (Munich: Zentralverlag der NSDAP., 1941), pp. 84-89.

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## The Morals of the Rich

by Joseph Goebbels

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It is easier for the rich to be moral than it is for the poor. Wealth protects the wealthy, but encourages the poor to take action.

A rich man, for example, would never think of stealing bread. Only someone who is hungry but has no money steals bread. When the rich man is hungry, he has more than enough bread and everything else besides to quell his hunger.

Likewise, a rich man with a car will never travel without a ticket on the subway. Aside from the fact that he could easily buy a ticket, he has a fancy car waiting in front of his fancy house.

The rules of social conduct are also stricter when one is poor. The poor are crammed together in huge apartment buildings, while the rich live in large houses with enough rooms so that everyone can find a place away from everyone else in the family when necessary. In an apartment building, on the other hand, where people live on top of each other, one has to turn off the radio by a certain hour, since the neighbor wants to get to sleep, sleep he needs if he is to get up and go to work tomorrow. In a big house one can let the radio blare all night, since the nearest house is 30, 40, or 100 meters away.

The poor live a more disciplined life than the rich, otherwise they could not get along with each other.

It is absurd for the rich to complain that certain rules apply to the poor that are not at all necessary for the rich.

As far as morals go, the most moral people are those who have had an exciting life already. As the proverb has it, the old whore prays the loudest. Nature makes morality easy at that point, and it is easy to understand why at an advanced age one might attempt to atone for a wild life. They want to forget a notorious past, and therefore love to preach morality to those who are still in the middle of life, or have not even yet begun to live. Everything is suddenly turned around. The old demand morality of the youth, especially when they used their own youth to the fullest.

This is true not only of individuals, but also of peoples. This is the real reason why we are not at the moment able to agree with the democracies, England above all.

The English talk a lot about political morality. They have everything they need. They established a world empire at a time when politics was not all that concerned about morality. Now they are defending their empire with moral platitudes.

They do not even think about stealing food, since they are not hungry. They have enough food whenever they want it. They can joke about our Four Year Plan, since they have at their disposal the enormous wealth of their empire. The boundaries of their national life can be very lax, not to say democratic, since they face no threat to their national existence.

It is not so easy for us Germans. We have been a fully unified nation only for the last six years. We are still young and bear the scars of our former discords. We have to be cautious, sometimes even strict, lest the old wounds reopen.

The English can afford the luxury of so-called freedom of opinion. It costs them nothing. The unity of the empire is in no danger. The whole English people is united in a single nation. They need no startling actions or “fait accomplis,” since they have everything the need, or even could wish for.

It would never occur to the English to add to their nation, since the English people have been united for centuries.

We, however, were forced to such things. We had no choice. We do it not because we feel superior, but because we must in order to survive. That has nothing to do with morality from either the English or the German side. One should be wary of using terms that have an entirely different meaning in political life than they do in private life.

Leading officials in England recently have been saying that while it is true that England has protectorates, English protectorates exist only to guard the freedom and culture of the peoples who live there.

Europe grinned as this profound wisdom was revealed. The English have the ability to conceal the truth with moralistic phrases, sometimes concealing rather dubious situations that otherwise would provoke some excitement.

They are such moralists today because they have their sheep safely in the barn, and would like to forget their past. They find nothing wrong with the fact that Europe is divided into haves and have-nots. They have no idea that the have-nots may not be happy with the situation. They would never even think of changing the way things are. The world is the way God wants it. He ordained that the English have everything, and the other peoples of the world are poor, and therefore dependent on the English.

London has a newspaper that is prototypically English. It is called the “Times.” It is mostly very refined and serious, and only rarely throws insults. It is extraordinarily moralistic, and thinks that its God-given task is to deliver political rebukes to the rest of the world. It thinks itself called to comment on everything that goes on in the world, and embodies the typical English notion of how things ought to be. The remarkable thing is that sometimes the English actually believe what they say. They know how to be so insolent and blatantly deceptive that one does not know what to say. They hold to their lies so strongly, even when they are proven false, that one who does not understand the mentality might easily believe that they had fallen for their own lies. That is not the case. It is only proof of the remarkable national discipline that the English press maintains, despite all the talk about the freedom of opinion.

At the moment, however, the English press really has gone too far. No one else believes it any longer. Everywhere in Europe, people wink when the English begin to speak on difficult political matters. They invite people to morning and evening prayers, where they hope to do a little political business or cattle trading.

Were they battling for their national existence, they would doubtlessly use every means at their disposal. However, they have always thought it better to fight to the last Frenchman, Russian, or American.

An example of the depth of London’s lies is the recent story about an alleged German ultimatum to Rumania. London invented the whole thing to rouse the world public against the Reich. Both Berlin and Bucharest immediately denied it in the strongest terms. But the English certainly did not look like sinners who had been found out. To the contrary, despite the forceful denials they continued to speak

about the matter as if they were not sure whether it were true or not.

That is how the English are now, always were, and presumably always will be. They have no right to tell us what to do.

How did we ever reach the point where we listened to their moral advice? When the discussion turns to political morality, the best thing the English press could do is to stay out of the discussion.

For the past few weeks, the English have been broadcasting the news in German. They do it cleverly, giving the impression of loving the truth and of having almost scientific objectivity. They are doing that in the hopes of winning listeners in Germany that they will be able to use when things get tough. Then they will not be as objective as they now seem to be. They will revive the old atrocity stories that they used to rouse the whole world against Germany during the World War.

Now they seem surprised that German radio has begun to broadcast news in English. Soon they will start to complain. They cannot imagine that any other nation in Europe has the same rights that they have.

Their moral trumpeting in the past weeks as German troops marched into Bohemia and Moravia is a classic example of the English mentality, but with one exception: the moral trumpeting does not seem to work any longer.

All of Europe at present is revolted by England acting as its moral aunt, sitting on the sofa of its empire, secure in its own wealth, complaining about others. Europe has changed since the war. The poor nations are also the young nations. They want to live. They will live. The Archbishop of Canterbury will not stop them. They have seen through the rich. England can no longer dismiss the demands of the have-nots with pious phrases. Their mimicry will not work any longer.

John Bull should be advised to remove the mask so that Europe will be able to see what is behind the fog of phrases England is using to confuse world opinion. Their empire was built through war, oppression, concentration camps, starvation and blood.

We Germans are glad to listen to moral advice, but only from those who have the right to give it. England does not. When people are talking about political morality, the Empire had best remain silent. We have some friendly advice for London. Do not shout so loudly. You are not alone. The whole world is laughing itself to death at pious talk of morality coming from those who reek of blood.