

Appeal by the Reich Leader of the German Labor Front, published in the *Völkischer Beobachter* (November 20, 1939)

Abstract

In the following excerpt from the party newspaper *Völkischer Beobachter*, Dr. Robert Ley, the leader of the German Labor Front [*Deutsche Arbeitsfront* or DAF], addresses the German workforce, highlighting the regime's success in prosecuting the war and emphasizing that conditions for workers had improved since the first weeks of hostilities. Ley makes reference to Reich Minister of Labor Franz Seldte's decree of November 16, 1939, which specified that bonuses for Sunday, holiday, and evening work would be paid again, effective immediately. The War Economy Decree of September 4, 1939, had eliminated these bonuses, but the Reich Ministry of Labor felt compelled to make this concession, since workers, particularly in the armaments industry, had boycotted the regulations imposed by this decree. After Seldte's decree was issued, most of these regulations were either lifted or toned down in response to passive resistance by workers in industries crucial to the war effort. Ley interpreted the forced improvements as proof of the socialist character of the German Reich, which had to assert itself in the face of threats by capitalist England.

Source

[...] That is the balance sheet in the social sector of our people after ten weeks of war. At the beginning of the war, the severest sacrifices, the tightening of belts; after ten weeks life back to normal, only a fraction of the powers have had to be used. That was not because the leadership yielded to your demands, workers, but because everything had been so well prepared that these sacrifices were unnecessary. We should almost be ashamed of our small part in the nation's war sacrifices, particularly when we think of the sacrifice in blood made by the soldiers. All the more reason, then, workers, plant leaders and retinue, why we must vow to do everything which the Führer demands of us.

[...]

Workers! Plant leaders and retinue!

I have tried to give you a balance sheet of our fighting nation after ten weeks of war in telegram-style descriptions of the situation.

However, the greatest credit factor in this balance sheet is the fact that the Führer lives!

Germany's position has never been better and that of England has never been so bad. This time we're going to do it! England will be beaten and you and Germany will be free!

Work versus Money-bags!

Freedom is ours!

[...]

Socialist war

[...] The path which the National Socialist Reich has followed since 1933 has been a path of work and hardship, the path of a poor nation. But, at the same time, in this poverty lay our wealth: conscious of the difficulties opening up before us, the whole nation became one big community. We have struggled out of the poverty of the fifteen years of Versailles because all Germans were gripped by the spirit of socialism, because we did not use our minds and our hands for the advantage of individuals or particular classes, but because the rise of the Reich was to the profit of every working German.

It is because of this that Great Britain has declared war on us. The regime of money grubbers, the bastion of capitalism seeks to strangle the Germany that has given the world the example of a socialist order. They fear the effects on their position in England itself, even more they fear for their huge colonial empire. Their subjects inside and outside are no longer to have the National Socialist state before their eyes which, by its mere existence, might turn them into rebels against their exploiters.

This means that Germany is waging the war not only for its own existence, but at the same time for *all* oppressed nations of the world. [...]

Source of English translation: Jeremy Noakes, ed., *Nazism: 1919–1945*, Vol. 4: *The German Home Front in World War II*. Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 1998, pp. 194–95. Reproduced with permission of the Licensor through PLSclear.

Source of original German text: Aufruf des Reichsleiters der Deutschen Arbeitsfront an alle Schaffenden Großdeutschlands vom 19. November 1939, in *Völkischer Beobachter* (November 20, 1939), North German edition; reprinted in Timothy W. Mason, ed., *Arbeiterklasse und Volksgemeinschaft*. Westdeutscher Verlag, Opladen, 1975, p. 1192ff.

Recommended Citation: Appeal by the Reich Leader of the German Labor Front, published in the *Völkischer Beobachter* (November 20, 1939), published in: German History in Documents and Images, <<https://germanhistorydocs.org/en/nazi-germany-1933-1945/ghdi:document-1581>> [May 11, 2024].