

On Restoring the Truth*

BERTOLT BRECHT

In times when deception is demanded and errors are encouraged, the thinker strives to correct whatever he reads and hears. Whatever he reads and hears, he says aloud quietly, and as he says it he corrects it. Sentence by sentence, he replaces the false statements with true ones. He practices this for so long that he is no longer able to read and hear differently.

The thinker proceeds from sentence to sentence so that, slowly but utterly, he corrects what he has heard and read in its full coherent form. In this way he leaves nothing out. At the same time, however, he places correct sentences alongside incorrect ones, without concerning himself with their context. He thus ruptures the context of the incorrect sentences, in the knowledge that a context often gives sentences an illusion of correctness, an illusion which comes from the fact that, in context, proceeding from one incorrect sentence, one can still deduce several proper conclusions. The process of deduction is then correct, but the sentences are not correct. The thinker does not act like this simply in order to establish that deception and errors are being perpetrated. He wishes to master the nature of the deception and of the errors. When he reads: "A strong nation is less easily attacked than a weak one," he does not need to alter it but to augment it: "but it attacks more easily." When he hears that wars are necessary, then he adds under which circumstances they are necessary, as well as: for whom.

* This translation first appeared in *Brecht on Art and Politics* (London: Bloomsbury Methuen Drama), pp. 133–140. The volume's editors, Tom Kuhn and Steve Giles, offer the following note:

Written in December 1934. In the left-hand columns Brecht quotes, almost verbatim, the original newspaper reports of the addresses by Göring and Hess. The reference near the beginning of Göring's speech is to one SA-Gruppenführer Ernst, who is suspected of having been involved in the execution of the Reichstag fire. The authenticity of his testament is disputed. The Winter Aid was a collection, and subsequently a direct tax, established by the Nazis in 1933 to help the needy. It was later used to finance rearmament.

1. *General Göring on the Triumph over Communism in Germany*
(quoted from the *Nationalzeitung*, Basel, December 12, 1934)

Verbatim Report of the Speech

It is precisely in an account of the defense against and ultimate triumph over the Communist threat that the methods of National Socialism, which are opposed to those of Communism in every respect, will be most clearly recognized.

The German government must reserve for itself the total freedom

to use the means which it considers appropriate,

and in so doing it can take no consideration of the advice of others.

I refuse to deal yet again with the accusations which have been levied against the government and against me personally in connection with the Reichstag fire, especially in view of the fact that the High Court of the Reich has examined the events surrounding the Reichstag fire with painstaking care and has made its decision.

I characterize the alleged testament

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It is precisely in a public representation of the defense against and ultimate triumph over the threat that, under the rule of the working sector of the population, the abuse of property for the purposes of exploitation might be abolished, that the methods of National Socialism, which, since they are mendacious, are entirely opposed to those of Communism, will be most clearly recognized.

The German government must reserve for itself the total freedom—from the moral demands of other capitalist states and also of capitalist groups at home—to use the means which it considers appropriate, namely, means like the arson attack on the Reichstag building designed to imply the guilt of the Communists, and in so doing it can take no consideration of the advice of others.

I refuse to deal yet again with the charges which have been levied against the government and against me personally in connection with the Reichstag fire, especially in view of the fact that the High Court of the Reich, which has since been relieved of responsibility for such trials, has examined the events surrounding the Reichstag fire with anguish and has made its decision: that the Communists accused by me did not set fire to the Reichstag and that it could not produce the evidence that we did this ourselves.

I characterize the testament, the authenticity of which has been attest-

of the former squad leader Ernst as a crude forgery.

We were completely determined, after our seizure of power, to strike Communism in such a way that it should never again recover in Germany from this blow. To this end we needed no Reichstag fire.

To implement our measures we needed the instrument of a police force which was utterly reliable and as forceful as possible.

I have created this instrument through the reorganization of the state police and the establishment of the Gestapo.

Commentary

As at the Leipzig trial, General Göring argues in connection with the Reichstag fire that a sensational task is needed to activate the police and, in so doing, confesses openly to his arson. It seems that he must have enemies within the government.

2. *Christmas Message of the Führer's Deputy (Rudolf Hess) in 1934*
(quoted from the *Nationalzeitung*, Basel)

Verbatim Report of the Speech

With justified pride in the spirit of selfless sacrifice

and the willingness of our German Volk-comrades to help

ed, of the former squad leader Ernst, whom I had shot, as a crude forgery and thereby act in total freedom from all moral demands, using all the means which are necessary to overcome Communism.

We were completely determined, after our seizure of power in the interest of the property owners, to strike Communism in such a way that it should never again recover in Germany from this blow. To this end we needed a Reichstag fire.

To implement our measures against the starving we needed the instrument of a police force which was utterly reliable and as willing as possible to use force.

I have created this instrument through the reorganization of the state police and the establishment of the Gestapo, with the aid of the claim that the Communists and Social Democrats were preparing an uprising.

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With pride in the attitude of the propertied, who have sacrificed a little of that which had been sacrificed to them already by those without property, and in their willingness to appear as helpers to those who are

one may say today:

This Christmas and this winter
Germany will not let a single one of
its children go hungry,

the selfsame children, who just three
years ago were forced into rabble-
rousing demonstrations against *Volk*,

nation,

and faith,

in support of Bolshevik chaos.

Today they gratefully accept
their Christmas gift

from the hands of those who were
once presented to them as enemies.

Hundreds of thousands, indeed mil-
lions, of German workers, male and
female, who once gave up their hard-
earned pennies for the idea of an
international community of classes,

kept by them in misery, one may say
today:

This Christmas and this winter
Germany's propertied classes will not
let a single one of those without prop-
erty starve completely.

This is how Germany's propertied
classes behave toward
the selfsame people, who just two
years ago were forced by their need
into demonstrations against

that sector of the population which
exploits the others, the talk that peo-
ple would do well to defend some-
thing which does not belong to them,
and religion, which sanctifies the use
of property for the purposes of
exploitation in support of a
Bolshevist social order in which the
exploitation of man by man is impos-
sible.

Today they gratefully accept
their Christmas gift, without which
they would starve,

from the hands of those who were
once presented to them as enemies,
because they are enemies. In reality,
however, it was mainly poor people
who made the sacrifices.

Hundreds of thousands, indeed mil-
lions, of German workers, male and
female, who once gave up their hard-
earned pennies for the idea of a com-
munity of all people, without distinc-
tions of fortune or estate, which
would extend to all the countries of
the world,

sacrifice them today
for a socialism which is eager to act
and to help,

which embraces a nation.

I know that you Germans, at
home and abroad,

do not expect a political address from
me on Christmas Eve; indeed, that
you do not want that at all.

And I feel far too full of the
Christmas spirit to want to concern
myself today with everyday politics
and statistics. But I also know that
precisely the German abroad
can receive no better Christmas joy
than to be made conscious of this: he
needs no longer to be ashamed of his
German homeland; indeed, he
should be proud of it.

And when foreigners come to
Germany as guests, they are full of
admiration for what has been
achieved here in such a short space of
time,
not only in the internal and external
transformation of the German people
but also in terms of the tangible and
evident works,

which have already resulted from the
coordination

sacrifice them today, although they
are just as hard to earn,
for a state of affairs in which, for all
eternity, there will be the great masses
of those who need help and for whom
all that is left over are pittance
earned with difficulty by the exploited,
which only embraces the population
of a single country, but which threat-
ens all other countries.

I know that you Germans, as far
as you have property at home and
abroad,

do not expect an address on
Christmas Eve about how we intend to
protect your property; indeed, that
you do not want that at all.

And I have dined far too well to
want to concern myself today with
everyday politics and the falsification
of statistics. But I also know that pre-
cisely he who has his property abroad
can receive no better Christmas joy
than to be made conscious of this: he
needs no longer to be ashamed of his
German homeland; indeed, he should
be proud of it.

And when foreign exploiters
come to Germany, they are full of
admiration for what has been achieved
here in such a short space of time,

not only in the internal and external
impoverishment of the German peo-
ple but also in terms of the tangible
and (in the business section of the
newspapers) evident dividends,
which have already resulted from the
theft of the fruits of their labor and the

and reorganization of the labor power of the *Volk*. destruction of the social organization of the larger section of the population.

Commentary

When one has skimmed the speech and the restoration of the truth, reading from left to right, one should recall that the National Socialists needed to praise the Winter Aid Project, and indeed that was very necessary in view of the immense difficulties which are expressed in the right-hand column (in the restoration). Now, reading from the right column to the left, one can study how the individual concerned carried out his task. Then one sees what sort of a man he is, which class he belongs to, which task this class has taken on itself to solve, and how it is solving it.

—Translated from the German by Tom Kuhn