

The Reich Speaker School

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Background: The National Socialists faced an issue after taking power in 1933. Their speakers had been tested by hard political conflict from 1919 to 1933. Once Hitler was in power, some of the drive went out of the system. How was the enthusiasm of the early years of the movement to be maintained, and where would new speakers come from? This 1936 essay from the party monthly for propagandists reports on an effort to meet both goals. It shows the importance National Socialism put on constantly presenting the population with its honest important views

The source: Hans Rieß, "Ein Wort zur Reichsrednerschule," *Unser Wille und Weg*, October 1936, pp. 17-20.

A Word on the Reich Speaker School

by Hans Rieß

In the course of the last year as part of the reorganization of the party's speaker staff, the *Reichspropagandaleitung* has established a Reich Speaker School to train the most suitable and capable speakers. The Reich Speaker School is a so-called traveling school, since it does not have a fixed geographic location, but rather moves from *Gau* to *Gau*. This has the advantage of freeing participants from the usual necessity of traveling to and from the school, saving them much time, not to mention money.

The establishment of the Reich Speaker School has been warmly welcomed by speakers and propagandists. Interest in the new establishment was so strong from the beginning that a large number of applicants had to be turned down by the *Reichspropagandaleitung*. This alone proves how valuable the work of the Reich Speaker School is.

Still, there were a few cases in which speakers thought participation in the Reich Speaker School was not important, since they had been active as party speakers for years and had addressed hundreds of meetings successfully, without ever having gone to a speaker school. It makes no sense to train old and experienced speakers like them.

Others see the need for a speaker school, but do not think that the *Reichspropagandaleitung* needs to establish one. There are *Gau* schools, educational establishments, etc., and they do not understand why speakers do not attend existing schools. Since these objections might surface again, or may have already surfaced, it may be appropriate to refute these prejudices, for that is what they are.

The *Kampfzeit* [1919-1933] was undoubtedly the best school for National Socialist fighters, and National Socialist speakers in particular. All our familiar Reich, *Gau* and *Kreis* speakers came out of that hard school, and they are still the party's leading political speakers. However, here and there it must be admitted that there are political speakers who did well during the *Kampfzeit*, indeed who were often among the best speakers, yet today they do not do well because they have not moved with the times, because they keep playing the same old record from the *Kampfzeit* in their meetings.

After the three years of positive National Socialist constructive work that is behind us, such rhetorical activity is at least negative, in no way up to the increased expectations for a political speaker today. It is no longer sufficient for a speaker to attack our opponents and expose the mistakes of the past. Rather, he has to perform positive political work. He must address the events and questions of today. He should present his audience with the National Socialist worldview, and should help form the new German person in the way we want him to be formed and educated according to our worldview.

If a speaker is to do this creatively, he must understand the factors that influence the life of a people. He must be familiar with the history of his people. More than that, he must be familiar with the vital questions and things that influence the fate of our people at

present and in the future. Comprehensive knowledge is the essential equipment of a speaker. Although it cannot be the task of the Reich Speaker School to provide the speaker with such theoretical knowledge, it can give him practical advice in using his knowledge. It will make the speaker aware of common mistakes and give him advice for writing his speeches, and for his practical activity.

The most important task of the Reich Speaker School, however, is to give the speaker new drive, to give new fuel to the fires of his enthusiasm. It should help to preserve the revolutionary force of the *Kampfzeit* and to maintain the strength that will enable him, just as in the years of struggle, to inspire the hearts of his audience with enthusiasm, both today and in the future.

Given what has been said about the special tasks of the Reich Speaker School, having speakers participate only in regular training courses is not a happy solution. It cannot be beneficial to have the tried and tested speakers of the party participate in training courses with other course participants who have to start by learning the most basic elements of National Socialism.

The National Socialist speaker, based on his years of rhetorical activity, already knows a great deal about political, economic, cultural and social matters, which can be used as a foundation by the Reich Speaker School. In the discussions that follow each talk between the speaker and the participants, false ideas and impressions can be discussed and set right.

In these exchanges of ideas, all of life's questions can be considered from the standpoint of the National Socialist worldview, which contributes to the absolutely necessary building of a unified worldview on the part of the whole speaking staff. The speakers certainly should not become identical mechanical speaking machines, but rather thinking men with their own ways of expression and organization.

On the question of expert speakers, it is advisable to bring in leading experts from around the Reich, not from the *Gau* in which the course is being held. The likely experts from within the *Gau* are likely to be known by the speakers. It is understandable that even if they are extraordinarily capable in their area, they will not be as

interesting as experts from somewhere else in the Reich. Participants have regularly expressed the understandable desire to hear another expert on the subject, preferably a leading figure who deals with the matter on a daily basis.

It has also been valuable during Reich Speaker School courses to include visits to institutions, factories, etc., which provide participants with practical impressions that are more valuable and enduring than any theoretical training.

The Reich Speaker School is also extraordinarily important for training the next generation of speakers. This is a problem that daily becomes more pressing, as the circle of experienced old speakers from the *Kampfzeit* diminishes, and it is of great importance to find suitable people to replace them.

In the past, those who might become new speakers studied National Socialist writings to train themselves. But a command of the material does not in itself make a National Socialist fighter. This gives the Reich Speaker School a major and important task, but a satisfying one. It must prepare the next generation of speakers through intensive preparation and education, training the political speakers of tomorrow. Its courses will present National Socialist thinking in vivid form to the young National Socialist fighter. Here he will learn the qualities and characteristics of the speaker of the *Kampfzeit*, and here he will find the strength that will enable him to fulfill his mission, to go out to the people as the bearer and proclaimer of a new age.