

# The New Criterion

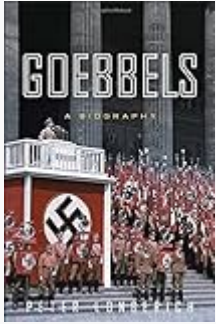
Books September 2015

## The man behind the curtain

by David Pryce-Jones

A review of *Goebbels: A Biography* by Peter Longerich

### BOOKS IN THIS ARTICLE



*Peter Longerich*

*Goebbels: A Biography*

Random House, 992 pages, \$40.00

Minister of Propaganda throughout the Hitler years, Josef Goebbels had no rival in the black art of lying to the public. Down the centuries, cynical rulers had habitually exhorted their subjects to commit crimes for the sake of empire and power. Goebbels went further, pioneering a modern technique of presenting crime as the pathway to virtue. Still today the memory lingers of this man, gnome-like in his brown shirt and swastika armband, on the platform of an auditorium in Nazi Germany whipping up mass audiences apparently only too eager to accept what was in fact incitement to robbery and mass murder.

Could Goebbels have been compensating for some inadequacy? One of six children of humble parents, he had a difficult start in life. In particular he suffered from a neurogenic clubfoot. An unsuccessful operation left him permanently lame. A dissatisfied student, Goebbels tried his hand at novellas,...

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**David Pryce-Jones** is the author, most recently, of *Openings & Outings: An Anthology* (Criterion Books).

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