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Hitler Would Have Been Astonished

The German dictator would not have recognized his description on *The Tucker Carlson Show*.

By Thomas Weber



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SEPTEMBER 6, 2024, 12:50 PM ET

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In some ways, Adolf Hitler and his propaganda minister, Joseph Goebbels, would have been impressed by the podcaster Darryl Cooper's appearance on *The Tucker Carlson Show* earlier this week. Hitler and Goebbels were masters of disinformation and demagoguery, and Cooper's tirade against Winston Churchill and his whitewashing of Nazi Germany's crimes reflected several of their insights. As the author of books on Hitler's radicalization and Nazi disinformation campaigns, and as the historical consultant for *Goebbels and the Führer*, the first major Hitler feature film in 20 years, I found it eerie to watch the conversation between Cooper and America's best-known political-talk-show host.

As Hitler put it in *Mein Kampf*, "The task of propaganda is to attract followers"; Cooper has been boasting that his podcast is now ranked first on iTunes. Goebbels used provocation as a tactic to achieve that goal, trying to trigger reactions from his opponents that would make headlines. Or, as Cooper said on X, "I like posting provocative shit, seeing how close I can step up to various lines with[out] going over them."

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Yet had Hitler lived to hear Cooper insist that after 1940, he had tried to achieve a comprehensive peace only to be foiled by Churchill, the German dictator would have been astonished. Hitler had, in fact, long favored a peace settlement with Britain. In Hitler's view of the world, however, a peace deal with Britain on its own would have been insufficient to secure Germany's future. Only grabbing more territory to the east and eliminating Jews and Jewish ideas, he believed, could deliver enduring security. Hitler saw Jews as the originators and agents of the greatest existential crisis that Europe had experienced for hundreds of years. Churchill wasn't the obstacle to peace; without Churchill, Hitler would have had an even freer hand to implement a program of ethnic cleansing and genocide in Eastern Europe.

The focus of Cooper's provocations, though, was not whitewashing Nazi Germany but, rather, lashing out at Britain's wartime leader as the "chief villain" of World War II. Seconded by Carlson, Cooper assailed Churchill, arguing that he was "primarily responsible for that war becoming what it did." And he charged that "the psychopath" was motivated by a quest for "redemption."

In keeping with his focus on “sacred symbols” and his affinity for national “redemption,” Cooper attacked Churchill as the embodiment of what is most sacred to American conservatism. Churchill is revered by the GOP establishment, which Cooper and Carlson disdain. During President George W. Bush’s years in the White House, he placed a little statue of Churchill in the Oval Office. Hillsdale College, the Christian liberal-arts school, hosts a Churchill Project to secure his legacy. Churchill is also, as Cooper stressed, a symbol of the Western world order established after 1945; he added that today, only those parts of Europe that experienced American and Western indoctrination after 1945 are rotten. Attacking Churchill, then, is Cooper’s means of attacking that postwar order.

And Cooper attacked these values in another way. Perhaps unsurprisingly for the host of a show called *Martyr Made*, he exhibits, at the very least, an acceptance of violence in the service of political goals. Unprovoked, for example, he stressed that he would “refuse to judge” the mob violence directed at Britons of color this summer.

There is nothing surprising about the flourishing of extremist ideology at times when people believe that their individual and collective survival are at stake. Just as in the interwar years, people of many nations no longer believe that the political establishment has what it takes to steer them out of a permanent and life-threatening crisis. In such conditions, false prophets and conspiratorial thinking can take hold of people’s minds, particularly when aided by new technologies of mass communication.

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The ideas propagated on Carlson’s show go well beyond those expressed by former President Donald Trump, and their dissemination on his show should be read as an attempt to see how far Carlson can change Trumpism. His decision to air these views of Cooper’s forms part of an extremist challenge to the postwar order. The response from American conservatives will test whether they are now willing to break with the

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legacy of Ronald Reagan and successive Republican administrations, and betray conservative understandings about the ideas that advance freedom.

In that sense, Monday's show poses a threat, not just to the GOP establishment, but also to Trump himself. The response to Carlson's challenge will help determine the future of American conservatism.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Thomas Weber is a professor of history and international affairs at the University of Aberdeen and a visiting fellow of the Hoover Institution at Stanford University. He is the author of a forthcoming book about Nazi disinformation and foreign interference in 1930s Britain, as well as the historical consultant on *Goebbels and the Führer*, to be released in the U.S. in October.

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