

Heinrich Himmler's speech at Posen

Himmler's speech at Posen was delivered to SS officers and NSDAP officials in October 1943, in which he spoke of the extermination of the Jewish people.

I want to mention another very difficult matter here before you in all frankness. Among ourselves, it ought to be spoken of quite openly for once — yet we shall never speak of it in public. Just as little as we hesitated to do our duty as ordered on June 30th 1934, when we placed comrades who had failed against the wall and shot them, just as little did we ever speak of it, and we shall never speak of it. It was a matter of course, of duty for us; thank God, never to speak of it, never to talk of it. It made everybody shudder. Yet everyone was clear in his mind that he would do it again if ordered to do so, and if it was necessary.

I am referring now of the evacuation of the Jews, the extermination of the Jewish people. It is one of those things that's easy to say: "The Jewish people will be exterminated", says every Party comrade. "That's quite clear, it's in our programme: the elimination of the Jews; that's what we're doing." But then they all come along, these 80 million good Germans, and every one of them has his decent Jew. Of course it's quite clear that the other Jews are pigs — but this one is one first-class Jew ...

To have gone through this [the extermination of the Jews] and at the same time to have remained decent, that has made us hard. This is a chapter of glory in our history which has never been written, and which never shall be written, since we know how hard it would be for us if we still had the Jews, living among us as secret saboteurs, agitators, and slander-mongers. Among us now, in every city — during the bombing raids, with the suffering and deprivations of the war. We would probably already be in the same situation as in 1916 and 1917 if we still had the Jews in the body of the German people.

The riches they had, we've taken away from them. I have given a strict order, which SS Group Leader Pohl has carried out, that these riches shall be diverted to the Reich, without exception. We have taken none of it. Individuals who failed were punished according to an order given by me at the beginning: he who takes even one mark of it, that will be his death. A number of SS men — not very many — have violated that order, and that will be their death, without mercy. We had the moral right, we had the duty to our own people, to kill these people who wanted to kill us. But we don't have the right to enrich ourselves even with one fur, one watch, one mark, one cigarette, or anything else. Just because we eradicated a bacillus doesn't mean we want to be infected by the bacillus ourselves. I will never permit even one little spot of corruption to arise or become established here. Wherever it may form, we shall burn it out together.

In general, however, we can say that we have carried out this most difficult task out of love for our own people. And we have suffered no harm to our inner self, our soul, our character in so doing.