



Volume 7. Nazi Germany, 1933-1945

Excerpt from Himmler's Speech to the SS-Gruppenführer at Posen (October 4, 1943)

Himmler's three-hour speech to high-ranking SS functionaries is notorious for its elaborations on the necessity of merciless brutality towards non-German peoples, above all the Slavs. Driven by ideological fanaticism and a fundamental contempt for humanity, Himmler sketches out his vision for the future rule of the "Germanic race" under the leadership of the SS, its political, ideological, and racial-biological elite.

The 1941 Attack

In 1941 the Führer attacked Russia. That was, as we know now, shortly – perhaps 3 to 6 months – before Stalin prepared to embark on his great penetration into Central and Western Europe. I can give you a picture of this first year in a few words. The attacking forces cut their way through. The Russian Army was herded together in great pockets, ground down, taken prisoner. At the time, we did not value the mass of humanity as we value it today: as raw material, as labor. The fact that prisoners died of exhaustion and hunger in tens and hundreds of thousands is by no means regrettable from the standpoint of lost generations but is deplorable now for reasons of lost labor.

[. . .]

It is basically wrong for us to infuse all our inoffensive soul and spirit, our good nature, and our idealism into foreign peoples. This has been true since the time of Herder, who clearly wrote "Voices of the Nations" ["*Stimmen der Völker*"], in a state of drunkenness, thereby bringing upon us, who came after him, such immeasurable sorrow and misery. This is true for instance, of the Czechs and the Slovenes to whom we gave their consciousness of nationality. They were just not capable of it themselves; we had to discover it for them.

One basic principle must be the absolute rule for the SS man: we must be honest, decent, loyal and comradely to members of our own blood and to nobody else. What happens to a Russian, to a Czech does not interest me in the slightest. What the nations can offer in the way of good blood of our type, we will take, if necessary by kidnapping their children and raising them here with us. Whether nations live in prosperity or starve to death¹ interests me only in so far as we

¹ In the original German, Himmler uses the verb *verrecken*, which means "to die." It should be noted, however, that this verb is typically used to describe the death of cattle – ed.

need them as slaves for our *Kultur*; otherwise, it is of no interest to me. Whether 10,000 Russian females fall down from exhaustion while digging an anti-tank ditch interests me only in so far as the anti-tank ditch for Germany is finished. We shall never be rough and heartless when it is not necessary, that is clear. We Germans, who are the only people in the world who have a decent attitude towards animals, will also assume a decent attitude towards these human animals. But it is a crime against our own blood to worry about them and give them ideals, thus causing our sons and grandsons to have a more difficult time with them. When somebody comes to me and says, "I cannot dig the anti-tank ditch with women and children, it is inhuman, for it would kill them," then I have to say, "You are a murderer of your own blood because if the anti-tank ditch is not dug, German soldiers will die, and they are sons of German mothers. They are our own blood." That is what I want to instill into the SS and what I believe have instilled into them as one of the most sacred laws of the future. Our concern, our duty is our people and our blood. It is for them that we must provide and plan, work and fight, nothing else. We can be indifferent to everything else. I wish the SS to adopt this attitude to the problem of all foreign, non-Germanic peoples, especially Russians. All else is vain, fraud against our own nation and an obstacle to the early winning of the war.

[. . .]

The Future

When the war is won, – then, as I have already told you, our work will start. We do not know when the war will end. It may be sudden, or it may be long delayed. We shall see. But I say to you now, if an armistice and peace comes suddenly, let no one think that he can then sleep the sleep of the just. Get all your Commanders, Chiefs and SS-Führers attuned to this; only then, gentlemen, shall we be awake, for then, so many others will fall into this sleep. I am going to rouse the whole SS, and keep it so wide awake that we can tackle reconstruction in Germany immediately. Then Germanic work will be begun immediately in the General-SS, for then the harvest will be ripe to be taken into the granary. We shall then draft age-groups through law. We shall then immediately put all our Waffen-SS units into excellent form, both as regards equipment and training. We shall go on working in this first 6 months after the war, as though the big offensive were starting the next day. It will make all the difference if Germany has an operative reserve, an operative backing, at the peace or armistice negotiations, of 20, 25 or 30 SS-divisions intact.

If the peace is a final one, we shall be able to tackle our great work of the future. We shall colonize. We shall indoctrinate our boys with the laws of the SS-organization. I consider it to be absolutely necessary to the life of our peoples that we should not only impart the meaning of ancestry, grandchildren and future, but feel these things to be part of our being. Without there being any talk about it, without our needing to make use of rewards and similar material things, it must be a matter of course that we have children. It must be a matter of course that the most copious breeding should be from this racial super-stratum of the German people. In 20 to 30 years we must really be able to present the whole of Europe with its leading class. If the SS,

together with the farmers, – together with our friend [Herbert] Backe – run the colony in the East on a grand scale, without any restraint, without any question of tradition but with nerve and revolutionary impetus, then we shall in 20 years push the national boundary [Volkstumsgrenze] 5000 kilometers eastwards.

Today I requested of the Führer that the SS – if we have fulfilled our task and our duty by the end of the war – should have the privilege of holding Germany's most easterly frontier as a defense frontier. I believe this is the only privilege for which we have no competitors. I believe not one person will dispute our claim to this privilege. We shall be in a position there to instruct every young age-group in the use of arms. We shall impose our laws on the East. We will charge ahead and push our way forward little by little to the Urals. I hope that our generation will successfully bring it about that every age-group has fought in the East and that every one of our divisions spends a winter in the East every second or third year. Then we never grow soft; then we shall never get SS members who only come to us because it is distinguished or because the black coat will naturally be very attractive in peacetime. Everyone will know that: "If I join the SS, there is the possibility that I might be killed." He has contracted in writing that every second year he will not dance in Berlin or attend the carnival in Munich, but that he will be posted to the Eastern frontier in an ice-cold winter. Then we will have a healthy elite for all time. Thus we will create the necessary conditions for the whole Germanic people and the whole of Europe, controlled, ordered and led by us, the Germanic people, to be able, in generations, to stand the test in her battles of destiny against Asia, who will certainly break out again. We do not know when that will be. Then, when the mass of humanity of 1 to 1½ milliards lines up against us, the Germanic people, numbering, I hope, 250 to 300 millions, and the other European peoples, making a total of 600 to 700 millions – (and with an outpost area stretching as far as the Urals, or, a hundred years, beyond the Urals) – must stand the test in its vital struggle against Asia. It would be an evil day if the Germanic people did not survive it. It would be the end of beauty and "Kultur", of the creative power of this earth. That is the distant future. It is for that that we are fighting, pledged to hand down the heritage of our ancestors.

We see into the distant future, because we know what it will be. That is why we are doing our duty more fanatically than ever, more devoutly than ever, more bravely, more obediently and more thoroughly than ever. We want to be worthy of being permitted to be the first SS-men of the Führer, Adolf Hitler, in the long history of the Germanic people, which stretches before us.

Now let us remember the Führer, Adolf Hitler, who will create the Germanic Reich and will lead us into the Germanic future.

Our Führer Adolf Hitler

Sieg Heil!
Sieg Heil!
Sieg Heil!

Source of English translation: Excerpt from Himmler's Speech to the SS-Gruppenführer at Posen (October 4, 1943). In United States Chief Counsel for the Prosecution of Axis Criminality, *Nazi Conspiracy and Aggression*, Volume IV. Washington, DC: United States Government Printing Office, 1946, Document 1919-PS [Speech of the Reichsführer-SS at the Meeting of SS Major-Generals at Posen, October 4th, 1963], pp. 558-59 and 570-72. (English translation attributed to Nuremberg staff; edited by GHI staff.)

Source of original German text: Auszug aus Himmlers Rede an die SS-Gruppenführer in Posen (4. Oktober 1943). In Internationaler Militärgerichtshof Nürnberg, *Der Nürnberger Prozess gegen die Hauptkriegsverbrecher vom 14. November 1945 bis 1. Oktober 1946: Urkunden und anderes Beweismaterial*. Published in Nuremberg 1948. Munich: Delphin Verlag, 1989. Volume XXIX: Amtlicher Text – Deutsche Ausgabe, Nummer 1850-PS bis Nummer 2233-PS, Document 1919-PS [Rede Himmlers bei der SS-Gruppenführertag in Posen am 4. Oktober 1943: Ausführung des Gedankens: andere Völker sind als Sklaven für die deutsche Kultur zu betrachten (Beweisstück US-170)], pp. 111-12, 122-23 and 170-73.