

# **Streicher at Nuremberg: The Obscenity of Evil**



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**St Anthony's School for Boys  
Holocaust Memorial Play**

*adapted from the trial transcript  
by Richard McMillan*

A joke that did the rounds of the Third Reich went as follows: ‘Hitler was visited by a fairy. The fairy said to Hitler: “Mein Fuhrer: I am prepared to grant you three wishes.” Hitler replied: “Wish number one: I wish all Germans to be honest. Wish number two: I wish all Germans to be intelligent. Wish number three: I wish all Germans to be National Socialists.” A bad fairy then appeared and brought about a state of affairs where Germans could only ever have two of the three attributes. In this way, you have honest Nazis who are not intelligent, intelligent Nazis who are not honest and honest and intelligent Germans who are not Nazis.’

Streicher, like fellow-defendant Rudolf Hess, was very much the honest Nazi. He had no influence over Hitler and restricted himself to the role of cheerleader for racial persecution and genocide. It is far from clear that the disgusting and lurid caricatures and hate-filled articles that appeared in Streicher’s magazine had any impact on the German people, who were highly educated. Such evidence as there is suggests that ordinary Germans regarded the regime’s persecution of the Jews with distaste but crucially their opposition did not amount to anything beyond passive disdain. When the advancing Allies discovered the horrors of the death camps, it was inevitable that Streicher would find himself on trial with the regime’s key figures. His crimes were that he was unrepentant and that he clearly conformed to Allied notions of what a Nazi was, namely a repulsive bully.

Fellow defendant Albert Speer was arguably more guilty than Streicher yet was spared the death penalty. Speer had served as Armaments Minister from 1942. As such, he had direct control of an industry which employed slave labour on a gargantuan scale. But he learnt English, put on a suit and said that he regretted what he had done. How could an educated, middle-class architect possibly be a convinced Nazi? The case of Albert Speer poses uncomfortable questions about the relationship between individuals and dictatorships, the answers to which are still not entirely clear. The play is closely based on the trial transcript: everything you will hear tonight was said in court.