

The Wannsee Conference in historical Research and Holocaust Education

Wolf Kaiser
House of the Wannsee Conference
Memorial and Educational Site



Wannsee Protocol

“In the course of the final solution and under appropriate direction, the Jews are to be utilized for work in the East in a suitable manner [...] and in the process a large number of them will undoubtedly drop out by way of natural attrition. Those who ultimately should possibly get by will have to be given suitable treatment”.

Wannsee Protocol

“In connection with this final solution of the European Jewish question, roughly eleven million Jews will have to be taken into consideration.”

Preceding the Wannsee Conference, 20th of January 1942

- Mass killing by the Einsatzgruppe in Eastern Europe
- Mobile gas vans
- Death camp of Bełżec under construction

Historical moment of the Wannsee Conference,

Transition from regional mass killing to a comprehensive genocide all over Europe

No decision about the „Final Solution“, but discussion about the implementation.

Misconception: Decision in Wannsee

Why constantly repeated?

How to deal with it?

deconstruct the misconception
without
diminishing the importance
of the Wannsee Conference

My presentation will

- discuss tricky questions concerning the Wannsee Conference
- outline a concept for lessons

Why was this meeting necessary
in the eyes of the perpetrators?

Heydrich's commission signed by Göring

“to carry out all necessary preparations in regard to organizational, practical and material matters for a total solution of the Jewish question in the German sphere of influence within Europe”

“Inasmuch as the competences of other central organizations will hereby be affected, they are to be included.”

Need of coordination

“meeting of state secretaries”

discussing the “final solution of the
Jewish question”

“to clarify fundamental questions”

‘How can Nazi Germany get rid of the Jews living in its sphere of influence within Europe?’

- expulsion
- resettlement actions
- immediate extermination

Wannsee Protocol

“As a further possible solution, and with the appropriate prior authorization by the *Führer*, emigration has now been replaced by evacuation to the East. This operation should be regarded only as a provisional option, though in view of the coming final solution of the Jewish question it is already supplying practical experience of vital importance.”

- 6 -

L a n d	Zahl
A. Altreich	131.800
Ostmark	43.700
Ostgebiete	420.000
Generalgouvernement	2.284.000
Bialystok	400.000
Protektorat Böhmen und Mähren	74.200
Estland - judenfrei -	
Lettland	3.500
Litauen	34.000
Belgien	43.000
Dänemark	5.600
Frankreich / Besetztes Gebiet	165.000
Unbesetztes Gebiet	700.000
Griechenland	69.600
Niederlande	160.800
Norwegen	1.300
B. Bulgarien	48.000
England	330.000
Finnland	2.300
Irland	4.000
Italien einschl. Sardinien	58.000
Albanien	200
Kroatien	40.000
Portugal	3.000
Rumänien einschl. Bessarabien	342.000
Schweden	8.000
Schweiz	18.000
Serbien	10.000
Slowakei	88.000
Spanien	6.000
Türkei (europ. Teil)	55.500
Ungarn	742.800
UdSSR	5.000.000
Ukraine	2.994.684
Weißrußland aus- schl. Bialystok	446.484
Zusammen: über	11.000.000

Turkey (European part)

Croatia

Serbia

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France/ Occupied Territory
Unoccupied Territory

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Ostgebiete	420.000
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Bialystok	400.000
Protektorat Böhmen und Mähren	74.200
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Niederlande	160.800
Norwegen	1.300

UdSSR		5.000.000
Ukraine	2.994.684	
Weißrußland aus- schl. Bialystok	446.484	

Soviet Union		5.000.000
Ukraine	2.994.684	
Belorussia except Bialystok	446.484	

Wannsee Protocol

“The influence that Jews exert everywhere in the USSR is well known. In the European part of Russia live approximately five million Jews, in the Asian part barely a quarter of a million.”

The vague or euphemistic language of the Protocol



The language of the Protocol

“In conclusion there was a discussion about the various types of possible solutions.”



Eichmann Trial, Jerusalem 1961



Judge Raveh:

“Perhaps you remember what was spoken there?”

Eichmann:

“The various possibilities of killing were discussed.”

„possibilities of killing“

Judge Landau: “Who spoke about this topic there?”

Eichmann: “[...] I would definitely not be able to remember this, if I did not know that at that time I said to myself: Look at that...Stuckart, who was always considered to be a very precise and very particular stickler for the law, and here the whole tone and all the manner of speech were totally out of keeping with legal language. That is the only thing, I would say, which has actually remained imprinted on my mind. [...] There was talk about killing and eliminating and exterminating.”

(session 106, July 21, 1961)

Eichmann Trial, Session 107

Eichmann: Heydrich wanted “to nail the state secretaries down one by one” on cooperating.

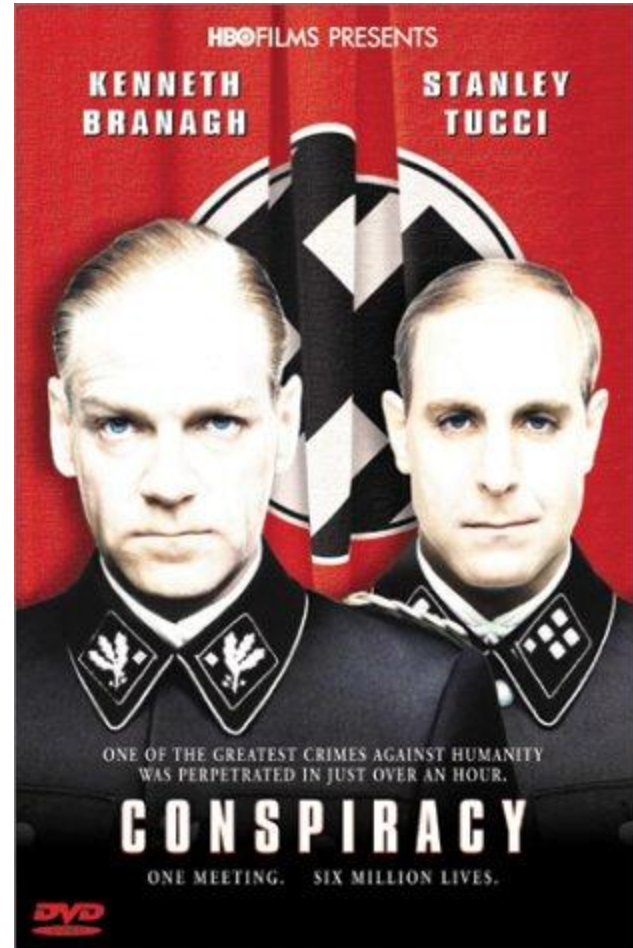
(July 24, 1961)

A study day or sequence of lessons
on the Wannsee Conference
Suggestions

Sequence of one of the docu- dramas



„Die Wannsee-Konferenz“
Germany 1984



2000

Topics for small groups

1. Biographies of participants of the Wannsee Conference
2. The radicalization of anti-Jewish ideology and politics before the Wannsee Conference
3. The Implementation of the “Final Solution”: Who took part in the deportations?
4. The implementation in states that were Germany’s allies – a comparison

Participants of the Wannsee Conference



OTTO HOFMANN
Chef des SS-Rasse- und Siedlungshauptamts (RuSHA)



REINHARD HEYDRICH
Chef der Sicherheitspolizei und des SD (RSHA)
Amtierender Reichsprotektor in Böhmen und Mähren



DR. GERHARD KLOPFER
Partei-Kanzlei der NSDAP
Ministerialdirektor



DR. WILHELM KRITZINGER
Reichskanzlei
Ministerialdirektor



DR. JOSEF BÜHLER
Regierung des Generalgouverneurs in Krakau
Staatssekretär



DR. ALFRED MEYER
Reichsministerium für die besetzten Ostgebiete
Ständiger Vertreter des Reichsministers



ERICH NEUMANN
Amt des Beauftragten für den Vierjahresplan
Staatssekretär



DR. WILHELM STUCKART
Reichsministerium des Innern
Staatssekretär



DR. ROLAND FREISLER
Reichsjustizministerium
Staatssekretär



HEINRICH MÜLLER
Reichssicherheitshauptamt (RSHA)
Chef Amt IV Gestapo



DR. RUDOLF LANGE
Kommandeur der Sicherheitspolizei und des SD (KdS)
Lettland



DR. EBERHARD SCHÖNGARTH
Befehlshaber der Sicherheitspolizei und des SD (BdS)
Generalgouvernement



ADOLF EICHMANN
Reichssicherheitshauptamt (RSHA)
Leiter Referat IV B 4 Räumungs- und Judenangelegenheiten



MARTIN LUTHER
Auswärtiges Amt
Unterstaatssekretär



DR. GEORG LEIBBRANDT
Reichsministerium für die besetzten Ostgebiete
Ministerialdirektor

Assignments concerning the participants of the Wannsee Conference

Imagine your group would write a historical novel about the Wannsee Conference. You would need to prepare it through historical research.

**Write a short portrait of one of the participants
of the Wannsee Conference**

(biographical data that were important for molding his character, position and actions / crimes, personal testimonials)

Possible selection of biographies

Reich Security Main Office



Head of RSHA

driving force
pursuing a
policy of
destruction



Director of the
Section for
Jewish Affairs

organizing the
deportations

ministerial bureaucracy



State Secretary
Reich Ministry of
the Interior

convinced Nazi
Leading role in
politics and
legislation
against Jews



Reich Chancellery

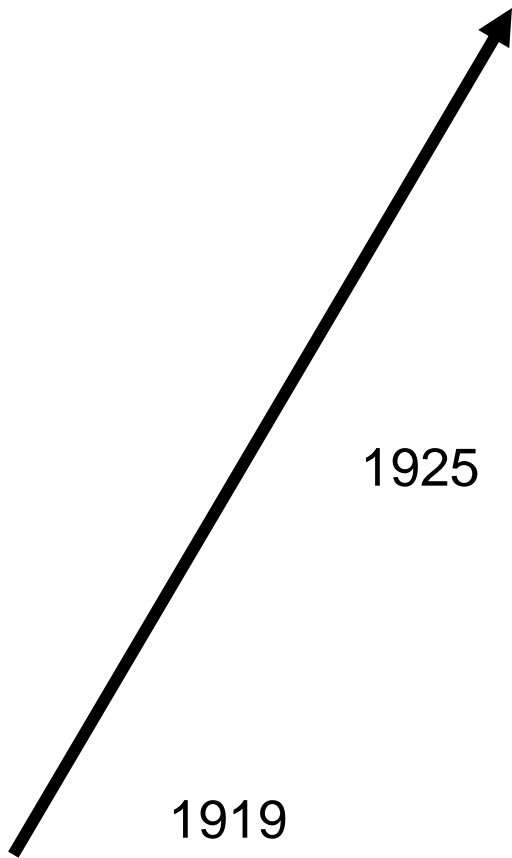
conservative expert
Well informed about
the mass shootings

Assignments concerning the process of radicalization

Determine **the stages in the process of radicalization** and write them down in brief notes on flipchart paper!

When referring to certain documents, please make sure that you mention the date when the document was written and the name of the author!

Radicalization 1919-1939

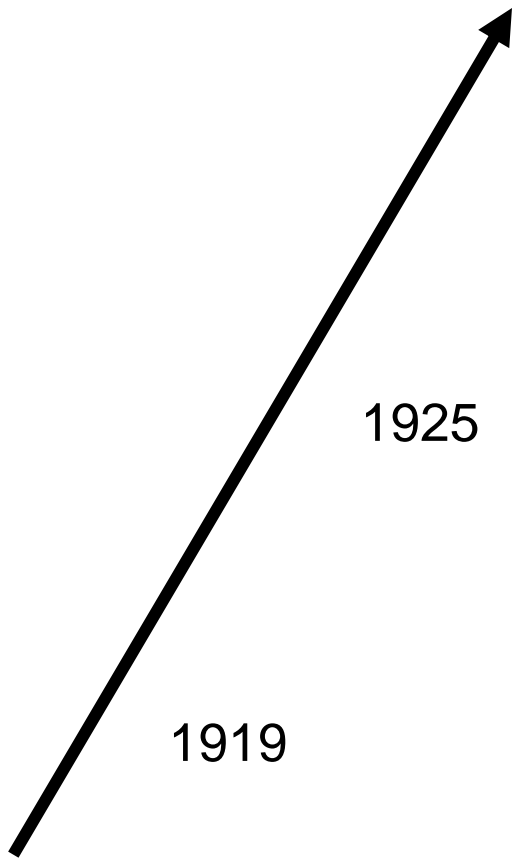


30/01/1939 A. *Hitler*. “Today I will be a prophet again: [...] the destruction of the Jewish race in Europe.”

A. *Hitler*. “If at the beginning of the War and during the war, twelve or fifteen thousand of these Hebrew corrupters of the people had been held under poison gas [...] the sacrifice of millions at the front would not have been in vain.”

A. *Hitler*. “Antisemitism prompted by reason [...] Its ultimate aim must be [...] the inexorable removal of the Jews altogether.”

Radicalization 1919-1939



1919

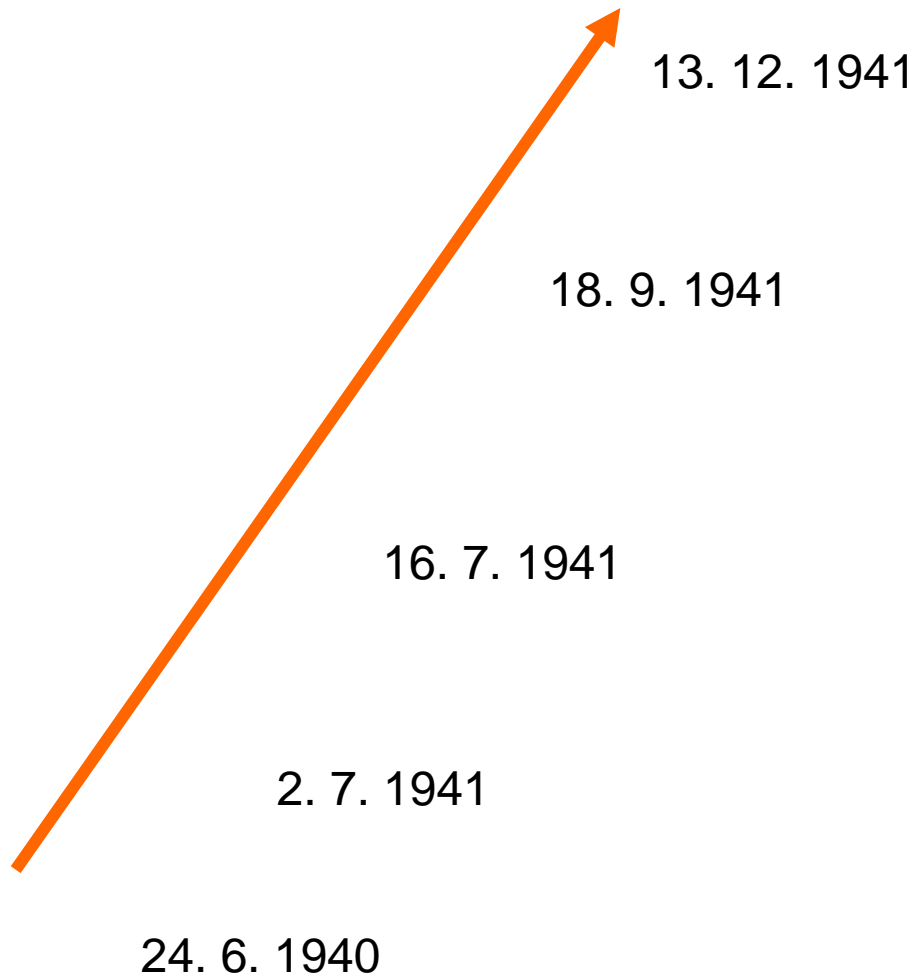
Adolf Hitler. postulates rationally planned, not only emotionally motivated action against the Jews with the ultimate aim to remove them altogether

1925

Adolf Hitler. murderous fantasy to held Jews under poison gas

30/01/1939 *Adolf Hitler.* Threat to destroy the European Jews

Radicalization 1939-1941



J. Goebbels: „The world war is here; the extermination of the Jews must be the necessary consequence.“

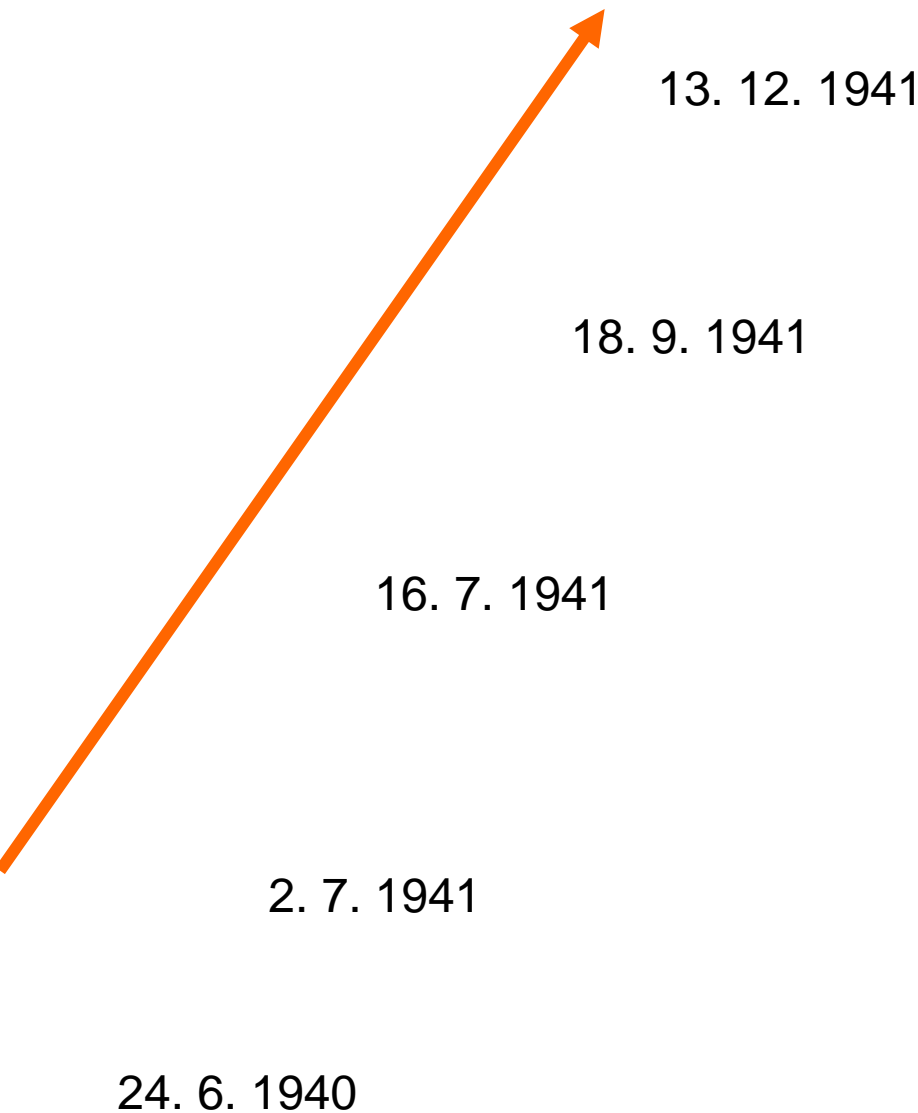
H. Himmler: “The *Führer* wants the *Altreich* and the Protectorate to be emptied and freed of Jews from West to East as soon as possible.”

R.-H. Höppner: “It must be seriously considered whether the most humane solution would be to finish off the Jews unfit for labour using some fast-acting method.“

R. Heydrich: „The following are to be executed [...] Jews holding Party or state office.“

R. Heydrich: “The main problem [...] can no longer be solved by emigration. A territorial final solution is therefore necessary.”

Radicalization 1939-1941



- J. Goebbels*: extermination of the Jews as the necessary consequence of the emergence of a World War
- H. Himmler*: urges to make Germany and the Protectorate free of Jews according to Hitler's wish
- R.-H. Höppner*: suggestions to use some fast-acting method to finish off the Jews rather than letting them starve
- R. Heydrich*: order to execute Jews holding Party or state office.
- R. Heydrich*: limited effect of expulsion, a territorial final solution is necessary

20/01/1942 Wannsee Conference

Im Zuge dieser Endlösung der europäischen Judenfrage kommen rund 11 Millionen Juden in Betracht.

In connection with this final solution of the European Jewish question, roughly eleven million Jews will have to be taken into consideration.

Assignments concerning the implementation

Describe how the agreement on the organization of the genocide of the European Jews was implemented through administrative procedures!

Write **all vocational and social groups involved** that are mentioned in the documents on flipchart paper.

Note bullet points concerning their involvement!

Explain orally the manner of their involvement!

Eichmann's express letter, 31/01/1942

Abschrift! *perlesen* (27)

Reichssicherheitshauptamt
IV B 4 - 2093/42g (391)

Berlin, den 31. Januar 1942

Geheim. *Geheim!*

Schnellbrief.

An
alle Staatspolizei(leit)stellen im Altreich
(einschl. Sudetengau),
die Staatspolizeileitstelle Wien,
die Zentralstelle für jüdische Auswanderung Wien.

Nachrichtlich
an
die Inspektoren der Sicherheitspolizei und des SD
im Altreich,
den Inspekteur der Sicherheitspolizei und des SD
Wien.

Betrifft: Evakuierung von Juden.
Bezug: Ohne.

Die in der letzten Zeit in einzelnen Gebieten
durchgeführte Evakuierung von Juden nach dem Osten
stellen den Beginn der Endlösung der Judenfrage im Altreich,
der Ostmark und im Protektorat Böhmen und Mähren dar.

Diese Evakuierungsmassnahmen erstreckten sich
zunächst auf besonders vordringliche Vorhaben, so
dass nur ein Teil der Staatspolizei(leit)stellen bei
den abgewickelten Teilaktionen angesichts der be-
schränkten Aufnahmemöglichkeiten im Osten und der
Transportschwierigkeiten berücksichtigt werden konnte.

Gem. Staatspolizei
Landpol. Nr. Würzburg
FEB. - 6. FEB. 1942 19. LB
Nr. 2725/42 Beil. X

Eichmann's express letter, 31/01/1942

Copy!

Reich Security Main Office

IV B 4- 2093/42g (391)

Berlin, 31 January 1942

Secret.

Express Letter.

To
all Regional (Command) Branches of the State Police in the
Altreich, (including *Sudetengau*) [annexed Czechoslovakian territory]
State Police headquarters in Vienna,
Centre for Jewish Emigration in Vienna.

Copies to
the Inspecting Officers of the Security Police and SD in the *Altreich*,
the Inspecting Officers of the Security Police and SD in Vienna.

Subject: Evacuation of Jews

Electricity company

**Berliner Kraft- und Licht
(Bewag) - Aktiengesellschaft**
 Reichsbetriebs-Nr. 5 0250 5003
 Berlin NW 7, Schiffbauerdamm 22
 Fernruf: 42 00 11, Apparat 263
 Postscheckkonto: Berlin 381 22

Meldung über evakuierte Juden

39/22081
 Rechnungsbüro Südwest 20
 Buchzeichen: 4205/173
 Aktenz.d.K/R: 02204
 Aktenz. d. Finanzamtes: präsident

Unser früherer Abnehmer Sarah Geis
 in der Anlage Merseburgerstr.13
 mit der jetzigen Anschrift evakuiert
 hat eine **Rest-Schuld** für Stromverbrauch — aus dem E³-Geschäft für Gebühren und Unkostenbeitrag **RM 3.40**
~~Forderung aus der hinterlegten Stromsicherheit einsch. Zinsen~~
 lt. untenstehender Aufstellung, die seit dem 26.1.43 fällig ist. **(Rückseite beachten!)**

8. FEB 1943
 Vermögenverwaltung
 Außenstelle

Schuld f. Stromverbrauch lt. Rechng. v. 26.1.43	RM	3.40
„ aus dem E ³ -Geschäft lt. Geschäfts-Nr.	RM	-
„ für Gebühren und Unkostenbeitrag	RM	- RM 3.40
Forderung aus der hinterlegten Stromsicherheit	RM	-
Zinsengutschrift bis	RM	-
Es bleibt eine Rest-Schuld / Forderung auf dem Konto 3000/20/554	von RM	<u>3.40</u>

Rechnungsbüro		K/R				K/FA	
ausgeschrieben	Dienststellenleiter	eingegangen	bearbeitet	weitergegeben	eingegangen		
	31.1.43	2.43	4.2.43	4.2.43			
Datum	Zeichen	Datum	Zeichen	Datum	Zeichen	Datum	

Hoteliers

Hotel Fränkischer Hof · Kitzingen

Pächter: Johann Brand

Königsplatz 4

RECHNUNG

den 25. März 1942.

Modern eingerichtete Fremdenzimmer
Zentralheizung
fließendes kaltes und warmes Wasser
Groß-Garage / Großer und kleiner Saal
Bürgerlicher Mittag- und Abendtisch
Bankkonto: Arela- u. Stadtparkasse Kitzingen 1323
Fernsprecher Nummer 2534

für Geheime Staatspolizei, Staatspolizeistelle Nürnberg-Fürth, Außendienst-
stelle Würzburg, in Würzburg.

Miete für zwei Säle am 21., 22. und 23.3.42	a 40.—	120.—
Miete für Gastzimmer (Durchsuchungsraum für die Juden) am 21., 22., 23., 24., und 25. März 1942	a 20.—	100.—
Licht für den großen Saal 30 kw a -.45 RM		13.50
Licht für das Gastzimmer 30 kw a -.45 RM		13.50
Reinigung für sämtliche Säle und Gastzimmer		50.—
		<hr/>
		297.—

In obiger Rechnung sind sämtliche etwa vorgekommene Beschädigungen innerhalb der benutzten Räume inbegriffen.

General Beck

Beanstandungen müssen sogleich nach Erhalt der Rechnung angebracht werden.

Hoteliers

Fränkischer Hof Kitzingen

Tenant: Johann Brand 4 Königsplatz

BILL March 25, 1942

for the Secret State Police, State Police Office Nürnberg-Fürth, branch office
Nürnberg, in Würzburg

Rent for two halls on March 21, 22, 23, 1942	a 40,-	120,- [Reichsmark]
Rent for guest room (room for searching for the Jews) on March 21, 22, 23, 24, and 25, 1942	a 20,-	100,- [Reichsmark]
Light for the great hall 30 kw a ,45 RM		13,50
Light for the guest room 30 kw a ,45 RM		13,50
Cleaning of all halls and guest rooms		<u>50,-</u>
		297,-

The bill above includes all possible damages in the used rooms.

[signature]

Complaints must be made immediately after receiving the bill.

Agencies involved in the implementation

- **SS-leadership** giving orders and supervising their execution
- **Reich Security Main Office** guidelines (Eichmann)
- **Regional and local Gestapo** managing the deportations on the ground
- **Constabulary** arresting Jews in the country-side
- **Local police** arresting Jews in towns; keeping them under guard
- **Head of the district authority** renting rooms for concentration Jews before deportation
- **Mayor** letting rooms for transitional concentration
- **Hoteliers** selling Jewish property at auction
- **Local tax authorities** utilizing food found in Jewish households
- **NSV (National Socialist Welfare Organization)**
- **Electricity company** calculating the last bill for electricity
- **Treasury Department** confiscating of Jewish property
- **Railway authorities** transporting Jews to the East
- **Order police** escorting the deportation trains

Assignments concerning the comparison between allies of Germany

Analyze the attitude and actions of Germany's allies towards their Jewish citizens during World War II !

Quote the statements in the Wannsee Protocol concerning allied states!

Could the Germans materialize their intentions?

Describe the persecution of Jews by national governments and their attitudes towards the deportation of Jews!

Characterize the attitude of the non-Jewish majority!

Protocol of the Wannsee Conference

“In regard to the manner in which the final solution will be carried out in those European territories which we now either occupy or influence it has been suggested that the pertinent specialists in the Foreign Office should confer with the appropriate official of the Security Police and the SD [Security Service].

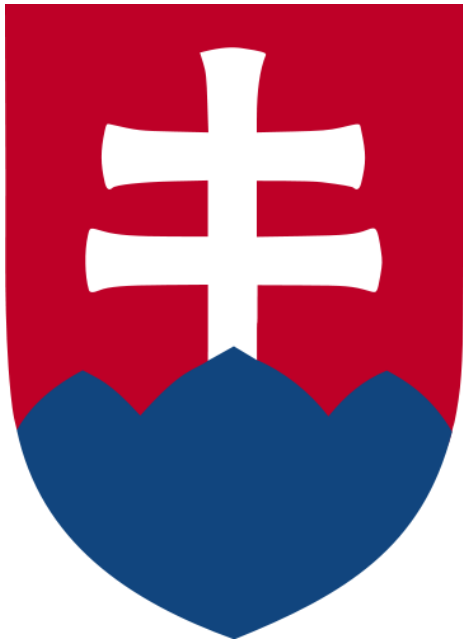
In Slovakia and Croatia the situation is no longer all that difficult since the essential key questions there have already been resolved.”

Protocol of the Wannsee Conference

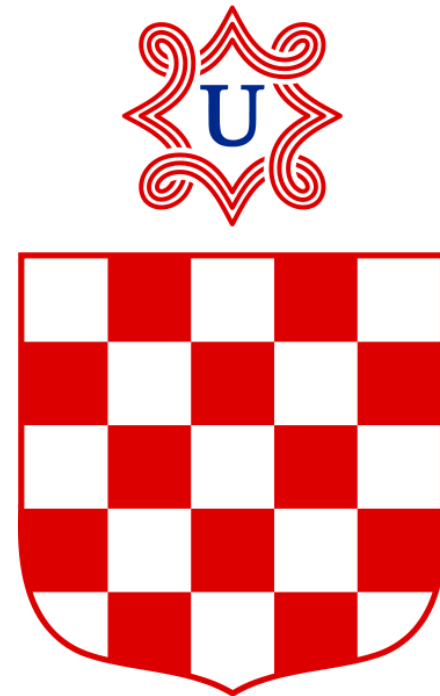
“In the meantime the Rumanian government has likewise appointed a plenipotentiary for Jewish affairs. In order to settle the matter in Hungary it will soon be necessary to impose upon the Hungarian government an adviser on Jewish questions.”

Implementation of the „final solution“ in states allied with Nazi Germany a comparison

Slovakia



Croatia



„Advisors on Jewish Questions “

Slovakia:

Dieter Wisliceny
(RSHA)

Hans Ludin
(ambassador)

Croatia:

Müller + Alfred
Heinrich
(SS)

Siegfried Kasche
(ambassador)

Anti-Jewish legislation

Slovakia:

„Jewish codex“

labeling

„Aryanization“

Croatia:

Racial Law

labeling

„Aryanization“

Deportations?

Protocol of the Wannsee Conference

“As a further possible solution, and with the appropriate prior authorization by the *Führer*, emigration has now been replaced by evacuation to the East.”

„the Foreign Office’s requirements and ideas for the planned total solution of the Jewish question in Europe“

“1. Deportation of all Jews with German Citizenship resident in the German Reich involving the Croatian, Slovak and Romanian Jews to the East.”

„the Foreign Office’s requirements and ideas for the planned total solution of the Jewish question in Europe“

“5. Declaration of willingness towards the Romanian, Slovak, Croatian, Bulgarian and Hungarian government to deport the Jews living in these countries to the East, too.”

Deportations?

Bulgaria:

Deportations from
Thrace and
Macedonia

Refusal to deliver
the Jews from
Old Bulgaria

Romania:

Shooting of the
Jews in
Bessarabia and
Bukovina

Expulsion to
Transnistria

No deportations
from the Old
Kingdom and
Southern
Transylvania

Hungary:

Deportations
began with
German
occupation
active
collaboration
of Hungarian
politicians
and police

Comparison

Croatia - Slovakia

2/3 of the Jews were brought to Croatian concentration camps and mostly murdered there

Jews in Slovakia were deprived of their rights and dispossessed, but not murdered in Slovakia

Comparison

Croatia - Slovakia

Government agreed with the deportations

condition: Jewish property goes to Croatia

Payment to Germany for transporting the Jews



ca. 6.000 Jews deported

Government agreed with the deportations

condition: Jewish property goes to Slovakia

Payment to Germany for “professional training”



ca. 58.000 Jews deported until October 1942



Deportations in the summer of 1942

Wannsee Conference

set the course for the “Final Solution” all
over Europe



Feasibility depended on
the attitude of the
governments and the
non-Jewish population

Attitude of the population

„The organizers of the murder of the Jews [Arturković, Kvaternik, Pavelić, Luburić] used people as tools for implementing their murderous plans, who had been misled and deceived through propaganda and race theories, and therefore mostly can only be considered as tool of the really guilty ones.”

Ivo Goldstein (2004)

Interpretation of the Holocaust

intentionalists

functionalists

?