

Protocol of the Wannsee Conference, January 20, 1942

Reich Secret Document

30 Copies

Protocol of Conference

I. The following took part in the conference on the final solution (*Endloesung*) of the Jewish question held on January 20, 1942, in Berlin, Am Grossen Wannsee No. 56-58:

Gauleiter Dr. Meyer and Reich Reich Ministry for the Occupied

Office Director Dr. Leibbrandt Eastern Territories

Secretary of State Dr. Stuckart Reich Ministry of the Interior

Secretary of State Neumann Plenipotentiary for the Four-Year Plan

Secretary of State Dr. Freisler Reich Minister of Justice

Secretary of State Dr. Buehler Office of the Governor General

Undersecretary of State Foreign Ministry

Dr. Luther

SS *Oberfuehrer* Klopfer Party Chancellery

Ministerial Director Kritzinger Reich Chancellery

SS *Gruppenfuehrer* Hofmann Race and Settlement Main Office

SS *Gruppenfuehrer* Mueller Reich Security Main Office

SS *Obersturmbannfuehrer* Reich Security Main Office

Eichmann

SS *Oberfuehrer* Dr. Schoengarth, Security Police and SD
Commander of the Security

Police and the SD in the
Government-General

SS *Sturmbannfuehrer* Dr. Lange, Security Police and SD
Commander of the Security

Police and the SD in the

Generalbezirk Latvia as
representative of the Com-
mander of the Security Police
and the SD for the *Reichs-*
kommisariat for the *Ostland*

II. The meeting opened with the announcement by the Chief of the Security Police and the SD, SS *Obergruppenfuehrer* Heydrich, of his appointment by the Reich Marshal^{1*} as Plenipotentiary for the Preparation of the Final Solution of the European Jewish Question.^{2*} He noted that this Conference had been called in order to obtain clarity on questions of principle. The Reich Marshal's request for a draft plan concerning the organizational, practical and economic aspects of the final solution of the European Jewish question required prior joint consideration by all central agencies directly involved in these questions, with a view to maintaining parallel policy lines.

Responsibility for the handling of the final solution of the Jewish question, he said, would lie centrally with the *Reichsfuehrer* SS and the Chief of the German Police (Chief of the Security Police and the SD), without regard to geographic boundaries.

The Chief of the Security Police and the SD then gave a brief review of the struggle conducted up to now against this foe.

The most important elements are:

- a) Forcing the Jews out of the various areas of life (*Lebensgebiete*) of the German people.
- b) Forcing the Jews out of the living space (*Lebensraum*) of the German people.

In pursuit of these aims, the accelerated emigration of the Jews from the area of the Reich, as the only possible provisional solution, was pressed forward and carried out according to plan.

On instructions by the Reich Marshal, a Reich Central Office for Jewish Emigration^{3*} was set up in January 1939, and its direction entrusted to the Chief of the Security Police and the SD. Its tasks were, in particular:

- a) To take all measures for the *preparation* of increased emigration of the Jews;
- b) To *direct* the flow of emigration;
- c) To speed up emigration in *individual* cases.

The aim of this task was to cleanse the German living space of Jews in a legal manner.

The disadvantages engendered by such forced pressing of emigration were clear to all the authorities. But in the absence of other possible solutions, they had to be accepted for the time being.

In the period that followed, the handling of emigration was not a German problem alone, but one with which the authorities of the countries of destination or immigration also had to deal. Financial difficulties - such as increases ordered by the various foreign governments in the sums of money that immigrants were required to have and in landing fees - as well as lack of berths on ships and continually tightening restrictions or bans on immigration, hampered emigration efforts very greatly. Despite these difficulties a total of approximately 537,000 Jews were caused to emigrate between the [Nazi] assumption of power and up to October 31, 1941.

These consisted of the following:

From January 30, 1933: from the *Altreich* Approx. 360,000

[Germany before
1938]

From March 15, 1938: from the *Ostmark* Approx. 147,000

[Austria]

From March 15, 1939: from the Protectorate Approx. 30,000

of Bohemia and
Moravia

The financing of the emigration was carried out by the Jews or Jewish political organizations themselves. To prevent the remaining behind of proletarianized Jews, the principle was observed that wealthy Jews must finance the emigration of the Jews without means; to this end, a special assessment or emigration levy, in accordance with wealth owned, was imposed, the

proceeds being used to meet the financial obligations of the emigration of destitute Jews.

In addition to the funds raised in German marks, foreign currency was needed for the monies which emigrants were required to show on arrival abroad and for landing fees. To conserve the German holdings of foreign currency, Jewish financial institutions abroad were persuaded by Jewish organizations in this country to make themselves responsible for finding the required sums in foreign currency. A total of about \$9,500,000 was provided by these foreign Jews as gifts up to October 30, 1941.

In the meantime, in view of the dangers of emigration in war-time, and the possibilities in the East, the *Reichsfuehrer* SS and Chief of the German Police has forbidden the emigration of Jews.^{4*}

III. Emigration has now been replaced by evacuation of the Jews to the East, as a further possible solution, with the appropriate prior authorization by the Fuehrer.

However, this operation should be regarded only as a provisional option; but it is already supplying practical experience of great significance in view of the coming final solution of the Jewish question.

In the course of this final solution of the European Jewish question approximately 11 million Jews may be taken into consideration, distributed over the individual countries as follows:

Country Number

A. *Altreich* 131,800

Ostmark 43,700

Eastern Territories^{5*} 420,000

Government-General 284,000

Bialystok 400,000

Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia 74,200

Estonia free of Jews

Latvia 3,500

Lithuania 34,000

Belgium 43,000

Denmark 5,600

France: Occupied territory 165,000

France: Unoccupied territory 700,000

Greece 69,600

Netherlands 160,800

Norway 1,300

B. Bulgaria 48,000

England 330,000

Finland 2,300

Ireland 4,000

Italy, including Sardinia 58,000

Albania 200

Croatia 40,000

Portugal 3,000

Rumania, including Bessarabia 342,000

Sweden 8,000

Switzerland 18,000

Serbia 10,000

Slovakia 88,000

Spain 6,000

Turkey (in Europe) 55,500

Hungary 742,800

U.S.S.R 5,000,000

 Ukraine 2,994,684

 Byelorussia, without Bialystok 446,484

Total: over 11,000,000

As far as the figures for Jews of the various foreign countries are concerned, the numbers given include only Jews by religion (*Glaubensjuden*), since the definition of Jews according to racial principles is in part still lacking there. Owing to the prevailing attitudes and concepts, the handling of this problem in

the individual countries will encounter certain difficulties, especially in Hungary and Rumania. For instance, in Rumania the Jew can still obtain, for money, documents officially certifying that he holds foreign citizenship.

The influence of the Jews in all spheres of life in the U.S.S.R. is well known. There are about 5 million Jews in European Russia, and barely another 250,000 in Asiatic Russia.

The distribution of Jews according to occupation in the European area of the U.S.S.R. was roughly as follows:

Agriculture 9.1%

Urban workers 14.8%

Trade 20.0%

State employees 23.4%

Professions medicine, press, theater, etc. 32.7%

Under appropriate direction the Jews are to be utilized for work in the East in an expedient manner in the course of the final solution. In large (labor) columns, with the sexes separated, Jews capable of work will be moved into these areas as they build roads, during which a large proportion will no doubt drop out through natural reduction. The remnant that eventually remains will require suitable treatment; because it will without doubt represent the most [physically] resistant part, it consists of a natural selection that could, on its release, become the germ-cell of a new Jewish revival. (Witness the experience of history.)

Europe is to be combed through from West to East in the course of the practical implementation of the final solution. The area of the Reich, including the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia, will have to be handled in advance, if only because of the housing problem and other socio-political needs.

The evacuated Jews will first be taken, group by group, to so-called transit ghettos, in order to be transported further east from there.

An important precondition, SS *Obergruppenfuehrer* Heydrich noted further, for the carrying out of the evacuation in general is the precise determination of the groups of persons involved. It is intended not to evacuate Jews over 65 years old, but to place them in an old-age ghetto - Theresienstadt is being considered.

In addition to these age groups - about 30% of the 280,000 Jews who were present in the *Altreich* and the *Ostmark* on October 31, 1941, were over 65 years old - Jews with severe war injuries and Jews with war decorations (Iron Cross, First Class) will be admitted to the Jewish old-age ghetto. This suitable solution will eliminate at one blow the many applications for exceptions.

The start of the individual major evacuation *Aktionen* will depend largely on military developments. With regard to the handling of the final solution in the European areas occupied by us and under our influence, it was proposed that the officials dealing with this subject in the Foreign Ministry should confer with the appropriate experts in the Security Police and the SD.

In Slovakia and Croatia the matter is no longer too difficult, as the most essential, central problems in this respect have already been brought to a solution there. In Rumania the government has in the meantime also appointed a Plenipotentiary for Jewish Affairs. In order to settle the problem in Hungary, it will be necessary in the near future to impose an adviser for Jewish questions on the Hungarian Government.

With regard to setting in motion preparations for the settling of the problem in Italy, SS *Obergruppenfuehrer* Heydrich considers liaison with the Police Chief in these matters would be in place.

In occupied and unoccupied France the rounding-up of the Jews for evacuation will, in all probability, be carried out without great difficulties.

On this point, Undersecretary of State Luther stated that far-reaching treatment of this problem would meet with difficulties in some countries, such as the Nordic States, and that it was therefore advisable to postpone action in these countries for the present. In view of the small number of Jews involved there, the postponement will in any case not occasion any significant curtailment. On the other hand, the Foreign Ministry foresees no great difficulties for the southeast and west of Europe.

SS *Gruppenfuehrer* Hofmann intends to send a specialist from the Main Office for Race and Settlement to Hungary for general orientation when the subject is taken in hand there by the Chief of the Security Police and the SD. It was decided that this specialist from the Race and Settlement Main Office, who is

not to take an active part, will temporarily be designated officially as Assistant to the Police Attaché.

IV. In the implementation of the plan for the final solution, the Nuremberg Laws are to form the basis,^{6*} as it were; a precondition for the total clearing up of the problem will also require solutions for the question of mixed marriages and *Mischlinge*.

The Chief of the Security Police and the SD then discussed the following points, theoretically for the time being, in connection with a letter from the Chief of the Reich Chancellery:

1. *Treatment of first-degree Mischlinge*

First-degree *Mischlinge* are in the same position as Jews with respect to the final solution of the Jewish question. The following will be exempt from this treatment:

- a) First-degree *Mischlinge* married to persons of German blood, from whose marriages there are children (second-degree *Mischlinge*). Such second-degree *Mischlinge* are essentially in the same position as Germans.
- b) First-degree *Mischlinge* for whom up to now exceptions were granted in some (vital) area by the highest authorities of the Party and the State. Each individual case must be re-examined, and it is not excluded that the new decision will again be in favor of the *Mischlinge*.

The grounds for granting an exception must always, as a matter of principle, be the deserts of the *Mischling himself* (Not the merits of the parent or spouse of German blood.)

The first-degree *Mischling* exempted from evacuation will be sterilized in order to obviate progeny and to settle the *Mischling* problem for good. Sterilization is voluntary, but it is the condition for remaining in the Reich. The sterilized *Mischling* is subsequently free of all restrictive regulations to which he was previously subject.

2. *Treatment of second-degree Mischlinge*

Second-degree *Mischlinge* are on principle classed with persons of German blood, *with the exception of the following cases*, in which the second-degree *Mischlinge* are considered equivalent to Jews:

- a) Descent of the second-degree *Mischling* from a bastard marriage (both spouses being *Mischlinge*).
- b) Racially especially unfavorable appearance of the second-degree *Mischling*, which will class him with the Jews on external grounds alone.
- c) Especially bad police and political rating of the second-degree *Mischling*, indicating that he feels and behaves as a Jew.

Even in these cases exceptions are not to be made if the second-degree *Mischling* is married to a person of German blood.

3. *Marriages between full Jews and persons of German blood*

Here it must be decided from case to case whether the Jewish spouse should be evacuated or whether he or she should be sent to an old-age ghetto in consideration of the effect of the measure on the German relatives of the mixed couple.

4. *Marriages between first-degree Mischlinge and persons of German blood*

a) *Without children*

If there are no children of the marriage, the first-degree *Mischling* is evacuated or sent to an old-age ghetto. (The same treatment as in marriages between full Jews and persons of German blood, [see] para. 3.)

b) *With children*

If there are children of the marriage (second-degree

Mischlinge), they will be evacuated or sent to a ghetto, together with the first-degree *Mischlinge*, if they are considered equivalent to Jews. Where such children are considered equivalent to persons of German blood (the rule), they and also the first-degree *Mischling* are to be exempted from evacuation.

5. *Marriages between first-degree Mischlinge and first-degree Mischlinge or Jews*

In such marriages all parties (including children) are treated as Jews and therefore evacuated or sent to an old-age ghetto.

6. *Marriages between first-degree Mischlinge and second-degree Mischlinge*

Both partners to the marriage, regardless of whether or not there are children, are evacuated or sent to an old-age ghetto, since children of such marriages commonly are seen to have a stronger admixture of Jewish blood than the second-degree Jewish *Mischlinge*.

SS *Gruppenfuehrer* Hofmann is of the opinion that extensive use must be made of sterilization, as the *Mischling*, given the choice of evacuation or sterilization, would prefer to accept sterilization.

Secretary of State Dr. Stuckart noted that in this form the practical aspects of the possible solutions proposed above for the settling of the problems of mixed marriages and *Mischlinge* would entail endless administrative work. In order to take the biological realities into account, at any rate, Secretary of State Dr. Stuckart proposed a move in the direction of compulsory sterilization.

To simplify the problem of the *Mischlinge* further possibilities should be considered, with the aim that the Legislator should rule something like: "These marriages are dissolved."

As to the question of the effect of the evacuation of the Jews on the economy, Secretary of State Neumann stated that Jews employed in essential war

industries could not be evacuated for the present, as long as no replacements were available.

SS *Obergruppenfuehrer* Heydrich pointed out that those Jews would not be evacuated in any case, in accordance with the directives approved by him for the implementation of the current evacuation *Aktion*.

Secretary of State Dr. Buehler put on record that the Government-General would welcome it if the final solution of this problem *was begun in the Government-General*, as, on the one hand, the question of transport there played no major role and considerations of labor supply would not hinder the course of this *Aktion*. Jews must be removed as fast as possible from the Government-General, because it was there in particular that the Jew as carrier of epidemics spelled a great danger, and, at the same time, he caused constant disorder in the economic structure of the country by his continuous black-market dealings. Furthermore, of the approximately 2½ million Jews under consideration, the majority were in any case *unfit for work*.

Secretary of State Dr. Buehler further states that the solution of the Jewish question in the Government-General was primarily the responsibility of the Chief of the Security Police and the SD and that his work would have the support of the authorities of the Government-General. He had only one request: that the Jewish question in this area be solved as quickly as possible.

In conclusion, there was a discussion of the various possible forms which the solution might take, and here both *Gauleiter* Dr. Meyer and Secretary of State Dr. Buehler were of the opinion that certain preparatory work for the final solution should be carried out locally in the area concerned, but that, in doing so, alarm among the population must be avoided.

The conference concluded with the request of the Chief of the Security Police and the SD to the participants at the conference to give him the necessary support in carrying out the tasks of the [final] solution.

1* Reich Marshal Hermann Goering.

2* See Document 106.

3* See Document 57.

4* See Document 68.

5* The reference is to the districts of western Poland annexed to the Reich.

6* See Documents 32, 33, 34.

Source: Yitzhak Arad, Yisrael Gutman, Abraham Margalio (Eds.), *Documents on the Holocaust, Selected Sources on the Destruction of the Jews of Germany and Austria, Poland and the Soviet Union*, Yad Vashem, Jerusalem, 1981, Document no.117, pp. 249-261.