



## Protestant Academy of Berlin on 80th Anniversary of Wannsee Conference

"The contemporary Church and Antisemitism today: What must we do?"  
by-European Coalition for Israel and Evangelische Akademie zu Berlin

Rabbi Abraham Cooper Remarks: As delivered link at 3:41

Highlights of prepared remarks:

Wannsee Conference:

I am honored to represent the 400,000 members of the Simon Wiesenthal Center here in Berlin and in doing so I honor our namesake, the great Nazi hunter and humanitarian, Simon Wiesenthal, of Blessed Memory. On January 20th, 1942, 80 years ago to the day, 15 German Ministers of State, among them 8 PhDs, some whose fathers were Christian Clergy, gathered around a large table in the Berlin suburb of Wannsee.

It was Reinhard Heydrich, deputy SS chief and head of the Reich Security Main Office, who summoned these important cogs in the Third Reich's hierarchy in order to obtain their participation in fulfilling Hitler's vision of achieving the "Final Solution" to the "Jewish problem."

The participants knew that hundreds of thousands of Jews were being executed en masse in occupied USSR, but Heydrich convened the meeting to ensure the involvement of Nazi Germany's key ministries to be able to rapidly carry out the most monstrous crime in history--the unprecedented genocide of a people.

Heydrich had expected opposition from some of the participants. But according to the architect of the Holocaust, Adolf Eichmann, who was present, Heydrich found an "unexpected air of agreement." Rather than expressing concerns or outright opposition, the eight PhDs in attendance expressed enthusiasm about being included in the plan. At his trial in Jerusalem in 1961, Eichmann testified, "These gentlemen were sitting together and minced no words about it. ... They spoke about methods of killing the Jews, about murder, liquidation ... about extermination." Gassing Jews drew particular interest.

\*In a mere 90 minutes, 15 Nazis, not thugs, but elites, sealed the fate of millions of Jews. Wannsee provides proof that the Shoah may have been the vision of one man, but it was embraced and carried out by all who marched in lockstep with The Fuehrer, including bureaucrats who never fired a gun in anger. Their skill sets were key to unleashing genocide.

That meeting, that vote in January 1942 was fulfilling Hitler's chilling call to Genocide, which he wrote and signed in September 1919—six years before Mein Kampf!

Hitler described his hatred of Jews, emphasizing that “emotional anti-Semitism, which will always find its expression in the form of pogroms” wouldn't solve the problem — only “a legal ... removal of the rights of the Jew” would.

Hitler continued: “The uncompromising removal of the Jews altogether” could be accomplished only “under a government of National strength and never under a government of National impotence.”

The summary of the conference — the Wannsee Protocol — is the only document in history codifying genocide as official state policy. Within an hour and a half, the plan to wipe out the entire Jewish population in Europe took shape. Wannsee did not happen in some backwater, but in the world's most culturally, technologically, and scientifically advanced society...

Can it happen again? Simon Wiesenthal's response to a university student's question in 1980:

“When you have organized hate by a government, a crisis, and technology anything is possible”, I heard Mr. Wiesenthal reply, adding, “if the technology of the Nazis had been available during the time of the Spanish Inquisition, no Jew would have survived in Spain; no Catholic in England, no Protestant in France”.

Ladies and gentlemen. Mr. Wiesenthal made those comments over 40 years ago when the Internet was not even yet a dream. Today's technologies, led by social media provides unprecedented access for today's haters and tomorrow's potential genociders across global platforms. (Just look at how China and Iran deploy cutting edge technologies to crush human dignity).

Allow me to enumerate some important lessons from Wannsee

1. Humankind must never confuse education with ethics or morality: 8 of the 15 Wannsee Conference participants who enthusiastically embraced the systematic murder of millions of Jews had doctorates.
2. Mr. Wiesenthal was right: Like Hitler, tyrants need to weaponize bureaucracies to achieve genocide.
3. When someone threatens to kill you and your people, take those threats seriously. Wannsee starkly showed that people have an endless capacity to do evil.
4. Never Again! For Jewish people—there was no state of Israel in the 1930s and 1940s. We will support a strong Jewish state, without apologies, strong enough to defend itself from genocide seekers, wise enough to build a future based on the Jewish people's values

5.       Never Again! For Germans- First and foremost—Do no harm to Jewish people. Domestically, there must be accountability for all perpetrators of anti-Semitism. Compiling incidents alone will not stop the hate or the Jew-haters. Accountability also means accountability.

We appreciate all the important commemorations at the Bundestag and Bundesrat on January 27th, but what we really need is for your new Chancellor, Olaf Scholz, to do something that Angela Merkel failed to do: Publicly confront the Ayatollah Khamenei's regime: Protest their Holocaust denial. Hold the Ayatollah Khamenei accountable when he endorses another "Final Solution", when he and his thugs threaten a nuclear Holocaust to wipe out another 6 million Jews, citizens of a democratic Jewish state.

Because of its huge economic ties with Iran Germany is uniquely positioned to demand accountability from Tehran. If Germany leads, the US, the UK, France, and others will be shamed into following...