

The participants of the Wannsee Conference

Dr. Josef Bühler (1904 - 1948)

State Secretary (Staatssekretär)
Government of the Governor General in Cracow



From June 1941, Bühler was permanent deputy of Governor General Hans Frank, and in this position shared in the responsibility for all crimes committed against the Polish population and for the mass genocide of the Jews in Poland. At the Wannsee Conference he urged Heydrich to start the "Final Solution" in the *Generalgouvernement* where, he stated, no "transport problems" existed. Furthermore, Bühler stressed that he wanted "a speedy solution of the Jewish question in this territory." In 1942, Bühler participated in the preparations for German settlements near Lublin and the abduction of Poles to Germany for forced labor.

Born in Waldsee (Wuerttemberg), the son of a baker. Catholic family. High school. Study of law. Doctor of law degree in 1932. Joined the Nazi Party (NSDAP) in 1933. As chief district attorney he was office manager to Reich Ministry without portfolio, Hans Frank. In December 1939, Head of the Governor General's office in Cracow, and in March 1940 his state secretary (*Staatssekretär*). Witness for the defense of Hans Frank before the International Military Tribunal at Nuremberg, thereafter extradited to Poland. Sentenced to death in Cracow in July 1948 and executed.

Adolf Eichmann (1906 - 1962)

Reich Security Main Office
Director of Section IV B 4



Eichmann, as organizer of the deportations, played a leading role in the process of exterminating Europe's Jews. Having been active since October 1934 in Section II/112 ("Jewry") of the Security Service's Main Office in Berlin, he concerned himself with the existing possibilities for driving the Jews out of Germany. Following the annexation of Austria and the German occupation of Bohemia and Moravia, Eichmann, in 1938/39, was in charge of the "Centers for Jewish Emigration" in Vienna and Prague. In October 1939, he participated in the plans for a "Jewish reservation" in Nisko on the river San (Poland). From December 1939 on, he worked as a consultant in the Reich Main Security Office's Section IV D 4 ("Emigration and Expulsion"). In March 1941 he became Director of Section IV B 4 ("Jewish Affairs and Expulsions"). He also drew up the summarized protocol of the Wannsee Conference. From October 1941 until 1944, the coordination of transports and the decision on how many Jews were to be deported each time proceeded from his office. From March 1944 on, as head of the "Special Command Eichmann" in Budapest, he was responsible for the forced transport of over 437,000 Jews to Auschwitz and other concentration and extermination camps.

Born in Solingen as son of a bookkeeper. High school, uncompleted training in engineering, then business apprenticeship. From 1925 until 1933 he worked as a salesman and travel agent in Vienna. Joined the Nazi Party (NSDAP) and the SS in April 1932 and moved to Germany in August 1933. From 1934 he was in the Security Service; since 1939 in the Reich Security Main Office. In early May 1945, he posed as an airforce private, was arrested but soon managed to escape. Worked under a false name as a forestry worker near Celle. In 1950, he fled via Austria to Italy and from there to Argentina where he lived in Buenos Aires. Kidnapped by members of the Israeli Intelligence Service in May 1960. Sentenced to death in Jerusalem in December 1961 and executed on May 31, 1962.

Dr. Roland Freisler (1893 - 1945)

State Secretary (Staatssekretär)
Reich Ministry of Justice



At the Wannsee Conference, Freisler represented the ministry which since the passage of the Nuremberg Laws in 1935 was principally involved in the persecution of the Jews along juridical lines. Freisler was considered a “guarantor of National Socialist convictions.” In August 1942, Freisler was appointed President of the People’s Court (*Volksgerichtshof*). In this position he and other members of the Court sentenced thousands of political opponents to death.

Born in Celle, son of an engineer. (Reformed) Protestant parental home. High school in Aachen, diploma in 1912. Study of law at the university of Kiel. Entered military service in August 1914 as an officer cadet, subsequently lieutenant. Russian prisoner of war from October 1915 to 1920. Continuation of the study of law at Jena. Doctor of law degree in 1922, and from 1924 lawyer in Kassel and member in the city parliament for the *Völkisch-Sozial Block*. Joined the Nazi Party (NSDAP) in July 1925. Member of the Prussian Diet. As of June 1933, state secretary (*Staatssekretär*) in the Prussian Ministry of Justice, member of the Prussian Council of State, and in October 1933 state secretary (*Staatssekretär*) in the newly combined Reich and Prussian Ministry of Justice. There he was primarily responsible for personnel questions, penal legislation, and execution of sentences. Perished in Berlin during an air raid on February 3, 1945.

Reinhard Heydrich (1904 - 1942)

Head of the Security Police and Security Service (SD)
Deputy Reich Protector of Bohemia and Moravia



From 1938, Heydrich was a key figure in the expulsion and extermination of the European Jews. Since the annexation of Austria, the Security Service had excelled in organizing forced emigration. Following the November Pogrom of 1938, Heydrich had 26,000 Jews in Germany arrested and imprisoned in concentration camps. When war broke out on September 1, 1939, Heydrich ordered the ghettoization of all Jews and the establishment of Councils of Elders in all Jewish communities in Poland. After the attack on the Soviet Union he initially ordered the "Special Units" (*Einsatzgruppen*) to execute Communist functionaries and Jews old enough to serve in the military. The "Special Units" soon got the order to begin their systematic mass murder of the entire Jewish population within the occupied territory of the Soviet Union. After receiving on July 31, 1941, a memorandum, signed by Göring, which authorized him to carry out the "Final Solution of the Jewish Question," Heydrich made plans for the extermination of 11 million European Jews.

Born in Halle on the Saale, the son of a composer and director of a Conservatoire. Attended a Catholic high school. Freecorps fighter in 1920. Joined the German Navy in 1922 and was dishonorably discharged as a first naval lieutenant in 1931 because of a broken marriage promise. Joined the Nazi Party and the SS in 1931. In July 1932, Himmler entrusted him with the organization and leadership of the Security Service (SD). Head of the Bavarian Political Police in April 1933, and Head of the Secret State Police Office in Berlin in 1934. In June 1936, he became Head of the Security Police, and in September 1939 of the Reich Security Main Office (*Reichssicherheitshauptamt* – RSHA). On May 27, 1942, Czech resistance fighters in Prague made an assassination attempt on him which led to his death on June 4, 1942.

Otto Hofmann (1896 - 1982)

Head of the SS Race- and Settlement Main Office



Hofmann occupied a leading position from 1940 until 1943 in the various Germanization policies involving the territories of Poland and the Soviet Union. He was responsible for “racial testing,” as a result of which various ethnic groups were driven from their land and replaced by Germans from different countries; for the abduction of Polish children to Germany; and for “SS-genealogical preservation” (*SS-Sippenpflege*). At the Wannsee Conference, Hofmann demanded emphatically that people of “mixed blood” (*Mischlinge*) be sterilized.

Born in Innsbruck, the son of a businessman. High school education. Volunteered for military service in August 1914, and in March 1917 was promoted to second lieutenant. In June 1917, he became a prisoner of war in Russia, escaped and returned to Germany where he was trained as a pilot. Demobilized in 1919. From 1920 to 1925 he worked in the wholesale wine business, thereafter as a self-employed wine salesman. Joined the Nazi Party (NSDAP) in 1923, the SS in April 1931, and from 1933 on was a full-time SS leader. In April 1943, he was appointed commander of the SS Main Sector Southwest and Senior SS and Police leader in Württemberg, Baden and the Alsace. He was also commander of the prisoners of war within Defense Sector V (Southeast). During the trial of the Main Office for Race and Settlement in March 1948 he was sentenced to 25 years imprisonment for crimes against humanity and war crimes. Amnestied in 1954 and released from Landsberg penitentiary. Thereafter business clerk in Württemberg.

Dr. Gerhard Klopfer (1905 - 1987)

Nazi Party Chancellery
Permanent Secretary (Ministerialdirektor)



Klopfer's role in the process of the "Final Solution" developed from the central position the party chancellery occupied within the governing system of National Socialism. He was one of the most influential and best informed bureaucrats of the Nazi regime. As he was both Head of Constitutional Law Section III of the Nazi Party chancellery and also Martin Bormann's deputy, he was in charge of questions relating to "Race and National Character," economic policies, cooperation with the Reich Security Main Office, and basic policies referring to the politics of occupation. In November 1942, he participated as state secretary in restricting the rights of Jews living in "mixed marriages."

Born in Schreibersdorf (Silesia), son of a farmer. High school diploma in 1923. Study of law and economics in Jena and Breslau. In 1927, he obtained his doctor of law degree. In 1931, district court judge in Düsseldorf. Joined the Nazi Party and the stormtroopers (SA) in April 1933. At the end of 1933, he became a consultant in the Prussian Ministry of Agriculture, and in 1934 at the Secret State Police Office. In April 1935, he joined the staff of Rudolf Hess, the "Führer's Deputy," and in the same year also the SS. In 1938, as Ministerial Secretary (*Ministerialrat*), he worked on the expropriation of Jewish enterprises. Fled Berlin in April 1945 and was subsequently interned. After he was released from imprisonment in 1949, the Superior Trial Court in Nuremberg declared him to be "only minimally incriminated" (*minderbelastet*). In 1952, tax accountant. In 1956, lawyer in Ulm. An investigation process by the prosecuting attorney's office in Ulm because of his participation in the Wannsee Conference was discontinued in 1962.

Wilhelm Kritzinger (1890 - 1947)

Reich Chancellery
Permanent Secretary (Ministerialdirektor)



Next to the Chief of the Reich Chancellery, Lammers, Kritzinger was the number two man in this position. He therefore knew about all anti-Jewish measures, and within his capacity as a Reich Chancellery official dealt extensively with "Jewish problems." Thus, in 1939/40, he assisted in drafting ordinances against "despoilers of the people" (*Volksschädlinge*), and also in the draft of the 11th Ordinance to the Reich Citizenship Law on the basis of which the German Jews were deprived of their property prior to their deportation. In 1942/43, as state secretary, he busied himself with the draft of ordinances designed to delimit the right of appeal for Jews in legal matters. When he was questioned in court after 1945, Kritzinger admitted to having been a participant at the Wannsee Conference and acknowledged its criminal nature.

Born as son of a clergyman in Grünfier (Netze District). High School diploma in 1908. Study of law. Fought in the frontlines 1914–1918, became a reserve lieutenant. In 1921 examination as an assistant judge (*Assessor*). Thereafter he worked as an assistant in the Reich Ministry of Justice. In 1925/26, senior councilor (*Landgerichtsrat*) in the Prussian Ministry of Commerce, and in 1926 return to the Reich Ministry of Justice. Joined the Nazi Party on January 1, 1938. Transferred to the Reich Chancellery in February 1938 where he served as the director of Section B with the rank of permanent secretary (*Ministerialdirektor*). At the beginning of 1942, undersecretary of state (*Unterstaatssekretär*), and at the end of the same year state secretary (*Staatssekretär*). Fled from Berlin in 1945, and in May 1945 became state secretary (*Staatssekretär*) in the Dönitz Government in Flensburg. Subsequently interned in Bruchsal, released in April 1946 but rearrested in December. Was found unfit to stay in prison on account of ill health.

Dr. Rudolf Lange (1910 – 1945)

Commander of the Security Police and Security Service (KdS)



For quite a long time Lange belonged to those Secret State Police officials of the “intermediate level” who made the functioning of the terror apparatus possible. When under Heydrich’s command the “Special Units” (*Einsatzgruppen*) of the Security Police and Security Service were formed in order to murder the Jews in the Soviet Union, Lange was called into action as well. As chief of staff of his outfit, “Special Unit A,” which moved behind the German Army into the Baltic region, he also led for a while “Special Command 2” which by December 1941 had murdered roughly 60,000 Latvian Jews as well as Jews from other countries deported to Latvia. Lange himself commanded killing operations at the outskirts of Riga. At the Wannsee Conference he was the “experienced practitioner” of mass executions.

Born in Weisswasser, the son of a railway construction supervisor. Study of law. Member of the Secret State Police in Halle in 1933, and doctor of law at the University of Jena. In 1936, member of the Secret State Police Office in Berlin. Joined the Nazi Party (NSDAP) and the SS in 1937. With the Secret State Police in Vienna in 1938 and in Stuttgart in 1939. In 1940, he headed the Secret State Police in Weimar and Erfurt, and in September 1940 was deputy for the Head of the Secret State Police in Berlin. In December 1941, Commander of Security Police and Security Service in Latvia, and as of January 1945 Commander of the Security Police and Security Service in the Warta region (*Warthegau*). Committed suicide in Poznan in February 1945.

Dr. Georg Leibbrandt (1899 - 1982)

Reich Ministry for the Occupied Eastern Territories
Permanent Secretary (Ministerialdirektor)



From 1941 to 1943, Leibbrandt headed the departments dealing with general politics, the Ukraine, the Occupied Eastern Territories (*Ostland*), the Caucasus, Russia, and also the press and cultural affairs. In this capacity he was prominently connected with the genocide of the Jews. As early as October 1941, Leibbrandt participated in a meeting with Heydrich where the inclusion of all Jews into the extermination program was discussed. Two days after the Wannsee Conference, he issued invitations for an official meeting to discuss the definition of the term "Jew" in the "Eastern Territories."

Born in Hoffnungsthal near Odessa. High school in Dorpat and Odessa. Fled to Berlin after the Bolshevist revolution. From 1920, study of theology, philosophy and national economy in Tübingen and Leipzig. Study trips to Paris, London, the Soviet Union and the USA. Ph.D. in 1927. Joined the Nazi Party (NSDAP) in 1933. Head of "Section East" (*Ostabteilung*) in the Nazi Party's office for foreign policy. Thereafter, in charge of anti-Communist and anti-Soviet propaganda. In 1938, assessor (*Beisitzer*) at the People's Court (*Volksgesichtshof*). In July 1941, Director of the Main Department No. 1 (Politics) in the Reich Ministry for the Occupied Eastern Territories. In the summer of 1943, he reported for duty in the navy. Was interned in 1945. Released from detention in 1949. A preliminary investigation by the District Court of Nuremberg-Fürth, begun in January 1950, was called off in August 1950.

Martin Luther (1895 - 1945)

Undersecretary of State (Unterstaatssekretär)
German Foreign Office



From 1940 until 1945, Luther was Head of Department D (*Deutschland*, i.e. internal affairs) and as such responsible for liaison with Himmler and the Reich Security Main Office. He was simultaneously in charge of Section D III ("Jewish question, race policy, and providing information about important domestic developments to the foreign missions"). By his close cooperation with the Reich Security Main Office, and with Adolf Eichmann's office in particular, Luther turned Section D into one of the administrative agencies involved in the "Final Solution". In the long run, the contribution which the Foreign Office made to the genocide amounted above all to the diplomatic preparation and protection of the deportations that proceeded from occupied and friendly countries. At the Wannsee Conference, Luther recommended to defer initially all deportations from the nordic countries because of the small "Jewish numbers" and the possibility of arising troubles; instead, one should concentrate first on Europe's south-eastern and western parts.

Born in Berlin. Did not graduate from high school. War volunteer in 1914, and lieutenant in 1918. Worked subsequently as a shipping agent for furniture. Joined the Nazi Party (NSDAP) in March 1932. In 1933/34, Head of the Economic Consulting Center of the NSDAP in Berlin. Placed in charge of the Party's Consulting Center at the Office of the Representative of the Nazi Party for Foreign Affairs, Joachim von Ribbentrop, in 1936. When the latter was appointed foreign minister in 1938, Luther became Head of the "Special Section of the Nazi Party" within the Foreign Office. In 1941 appointed permanent secretary (*Ministerialdirektor*), although his official designation was "undersecretary of state" (*Unterstaatssekretär*). On account of his attempt to overthrow Ribbentrop, he was dismissed in February 1943 and imprisoned as a "privileged prisoner in protective custody" in the Concentration Camp Sachsenhausen near Berlin. Freed by the Red Army, Luther died a month later in Berlin.

Dr. Alfred Meyer (1891 - 1945)

State Secretary (Staatssekretär)
Reich Ministry for the Occupied Eastern Territories



From the summer of 1941 until November 1942, Meyer, as deputy of Minister Alfred Rosenberg, was responsible for the three major departments of politics, administration and economy. In this capacity he participated in the exploitation and pillage of the occupied Soviet territories and the suppression and extermination of its inhabitants, in particular the Jewish population. Meyer had been invited to the Wannsee Conference because the genocide of the Jews on the part of the Special Units (*Einsatzgruppen*) was already underway in the region which his ministry administered. Meyer suggested at Wannsee that "certain preparatory measures" should always be carried out locally so as not to create unrest among the civilian population. In July 1942, he proposed to subject persons of "mixed blood" (*Mischlinge*) in the Soviet Union to the same measures applied to the Jews.

Born in Göttingen into a Protestant family, the son of a government councilor and building official. High school diploma in 1911. Officer cadet in 1912, company commander in 1914, and subsequently battalion commander. Prisoner of war in France in 1917. Discharged as a captain in 1920. Commercial employee and study of law, political science and political economy. Ph.D. in political science in 1922. From 1923 to 1930, legal adviser to a mining firm in Gelsenkirchen. Joined the Nazi Party (NSDAP) in 1928 and became head of a local party branch (*Ortsgruppenleiter*). Party district leader of Emscher-Lippe 1929/30, member of the Reichstag in September 1930, and in 1931 Nazi Party *Gauleiter* of Northern Westphalia. Appointed deputy governor (*Reichsstatthalter*) of Lippe and Schaumburg-Lippe in May 1933, and in 1936 Head of the Lippe state government. In 1938, Meyer became governor (*Oberpräsident*) of the Province of Westphalia and lieutenant general of the stormtroopers (SA). From November 1942 on, he was Reich Defense Commissioner of Northern Westphalia. Suicide in May 1945.

Heinrich Müller (1900 - ?)

Reich Security Main Office
Head of Department (Amt) IV



Müller, as head of the Secret State Police (*Gestapo*), participated prominently in nearly all crimes that were planned, prepared and organized in the Reich Security Main Office (*Reichssicherheits-hauptamt* – RSHA), and most notably in the genocide of the European Jews. From early September 1939, he issued directives in regard to “special treatment” (*Sonderbehandlung*, i.e. murder) of political opponents. The so-called “Jewish Section” (*Judenreferat*) administered by Eichmann was likewise under his direction. He was informed about the genocide of Jews in the Soviet Union in minute detail. Following Heydrich’s instructions, Müller formulated orders to the “Special Units” (*Einsatzgruppen*) and was responsible for drafting the “Report of Events” (*Ereignismeldungen*), the summary of the Special Unit Reports. Müller was in fact one of the most powerful masterminds behind the scenes of the National Socialist regime.

Born in Munich into a Catholic family. Father was a policeman. Junior high school, then training as an airplane mechanic. Volunteered in 1917 for military service and was discharged as a corporal in 1919. Thereafter, employee in the Munich police headquarters. In 1929, secretary with the Munich political police, operating against Communist organizations. Joined the SS in 1934 and was transferred to the Secret State Police Office in Berlin. In 1936, Deputy Chief of the Political Police Section of the Security Police’s Main Office. Joined the Nazi Party (NSDAP) in 1938. In 1939, Manager of the Reich Central Office for Jewish Emigration, and since October 1939 Head of Department IV (*Gestapo*) of the Reich Security Main Office with the rank of an SS *Oberführer* (no English equivalent; between colonel and brigadier general) and Major General of Police. Lost without trace since May 1945.

Erich Neumann (1892 - 1948)

State Secretary (Staatssekretär)
Office of the Plenipotentiary for the Four Year Plan



Neumann had participated as early as November 1938 in a meeting called by Göring to discuss the "Aryanization of the economy" as well as the special identification and isolation of Jews. At the Wannsee Conference, he represented the Ministries of Economic Affairs, Labor, Finances, Food, Transportation as well as Armaments and Munition. As Göring's state secretary, he looked out for the interests of the administrative office of the war economy and strongly suggested to defer the deportation of Jewish workers employed in firms essential to the war effort.

Born in Forst (Lower Lusatia) into a Protestant family. Son of a factory owner. After receiving his high school diploma, he studied law and national economy in Freiburg, Leipzig and Halle. Wartime service 1914-1917, ultimately as first lieutenant. In 1920, governmental civil servant (*Regierungsassessor*) in the Prussian Ministry of the Interior, thereafter in the Essen District Office. Senior Executive Officer (*Regierungsrat*) in the Prussian Ministry of Commerce in 1923. 1927/28, District President (*Landrat*) in Freystadt (Lower Silesia), then as Ministerial Secretary (*Ministerialrat*) again in the Prussian Ministry of Commerce. In September 1932, Permanent Secretary (*Ministerialdirektor*) in the Prussian Ministry of State in charge of administrative reforms. Joined the Nazi Party (NSDAP) in May 1933, the SS in August 1934. Served in the Prussian Ministry of State at the end of 1935, and in October 1936 in the Office of the Plenipotentiary for the Four Year Plan, Hermann Göring. Appointed state secretary in the summer of 1938, and from 1941 was deputy chairman of the board of trustees of the Continental Petroleum Corporation, which was entrusted with the exploitation of oil resources in the occupied territories of the Soviet Union. Since early 1942, general manager of the German Potassium Syndicate, Inc. Internment in 1945. Released from prison early in 1948 for reasons of health.

Dr. Eberhard Schöngarth (1903 - 1946)

Commander in Chief of the Security Police and Security Service (BdS)



As commander in chief of the Security Police and Security Service for the entire German occupied region of eastern Poland (*Generalgouvernement*), Schöngarth participated in all measures of suppression and extermination of the Polish and Jewish population in occupied Poland. After the attack on the Soviet Union, he formed a "Special Unit" in eastern Galicia which from July until September 1941 shot 4,000 Jewish men in territory bordering Poland. At the Wannsee Conference he was, along with Lange, an "experienced practitioner" in mass executions.

Born in Leipzig, son of a construction supervisor. High school. 1920 freecorps fighter. Joined the Nazi Party (NSDAP) and the stormtroopers (SA) in 1922. Bank employee from 1922 to 1924. In 1924, he began the study of law and political science in Leipzig, and in 1929 received his doctor of law degree. From 1932 on, he worked as a junior barrister at the regional courts of Magdeburg, Erfurt and Torgau. Joined the SS in 1933. In November 1933, he went to work for the Reich Post Office Administration at Erfurt, and in 1935 started work in the press section of the Secret State Police. In spring of 1936, he headed the Secret State Police offices in Dortmund, Bielefeld and Münster. In 1939, Senior Administrative Councilor and SS Lieutenant Colonel. In May 1944, Commander in Chief of the Security Police and Security Service in the occupied Netherlands. In February 1946, a British military court sentenced him to death and had him executed for having ordered the shooting of a prisoner of war.

Dr. Wilhelm Stuckart (1902 - 1953)

State Secretary (Staatssekretär)
Reich Ministry of the Interior



Stuckart, in the Reich Ministry of the Interior with its subordinate departments of "Constitution, Legislation, Administration," participated from 1935 in drawing up basic laws and decrees against the Jews that lived in the German Reich, most notably the "Reich Citizenship Law" and the "Law for the Protection of German Blood and German Honor" (the Nuremberg Laws). In 1940, he participated in the preparatory measures designed to deprive Jews of their German citizenship. In 1941, he worked out a proposal for having Jews inside the German Reich wear distinguishing marks. At the Wannsee Conference, Stuckart proposed compulsory sterilization of all persons of "mixed blood" (*Mischlinge*). And in April 1943, he presided over a conference of state secretaries on "Punishment by the Police of Jews guilty of criminal acts" (13th Ordinance to the Reich Citizenship Law).

Born in Wiesbaden, the son of a railway employee. Brought up as a Christian. High school diploma. Freecorps fighter in 1919. From 1922 on, study of law in Munich and Frankfurt/Main. Joined the Nazi Party in 1922. Doctor of law degree in 1928. Since 1930, judge in a lower district court. From 1932 to March 1933, lawyer and legal consultant of the stormtroopers (SA) in Pomerania. In June 1933, State Secretary in the Prussian Ministry of Sciences. State Secretary in the Ministry of the Interior in 1935. Joined the SS in 1936. SS Lieutenant General (*Obergruppenführer*) in 1944. Was interned in 1945 as Minister of the Interior in the Dönitz Government in Flensburg. In the "Wilhelmstrasse Trial" in May 1945 he was sentenced to three years and ten months imprisonment which, because of his preceding detention, was counted as having been served. A denazification court classified him in 1950 as a "fellow traveller" (*Mitläufer*), and in 1952 fined him DM 50,000 (German Mark). He died in November 1953 in a traffic accident.