

“I AM A HISTORIAN AS WELL”

THE WEST GERMAN RECEPTION OF *DIE WANNSEEEKONFERENZ* (1984) AND PORTRAYING HOLOCAUST PERPETRATORS IN PUBLIC TELEVISION DRAMA

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Abstract: *Die Wannseekonferenz* (1984) portrays the Wannsee Conference of 20 January 1942, where Reinhard Heydrich chaired a meeting of Germany’s ministers to co-ordinate the “Final Solution.” Produced by the public television network Bayerische Rundfunk (BR), *Die Wannseekonferenz* is neither mere entertainment nor a dry, unsubtle didactic film. Instead, it portrays history in a compelling and disturbing manner. The West German press, however, panned the film, which gained critical acclaim abroad. This article discusses its negative reception within the context of the 1980s television and memory landscapes through a grounding in archival sources.

Keywords: Wannsee, Germany, historical film, historical memory, Holocaust, public television

1 Introduction

On 19 December 1984 at 8:15 pm, the West German public television network ARD aired *Die Wannseekonferenz*, a docudrama which re-enacted the 20 January 1942 Wannsee Conference in real-time. Directed by Heinz Schirk and written by Paul Mommertz, *Die Wannseekonferenz* is a pathbreaking example of a responsible, sober, and minimalist television depiction of Holocaust perpetrators. Grounded in primary sources as well as the historiography of its time, *Die Wannseekonferenz* is not only an artistic interpretation of the conference, but deserves consideration as a historical interpretation of the Wannsee Conference. Although well-received internationally and within the West German film community, the West German press was comparatively hostile. The journalist and in-house historian for *Der Spiegel*, Heinz Höhne, sharply attacked both the film and its screenwriter in a review published in advance of its premiere.¹ Paul Mommertz published a rebuttal, and their argument provides a snapshot of the often rancorous debate about the appropriateness of depicting Holocaust perpetrators on West German television. It also illustrates that Germany’s much-vaunted culture of remembrance was by no means a foregone conclusion but was instead the result of the efforts of many individuals and activists outside the mainstream, including filmmakers.

This article focuses on *Die Wannseekonferenz* and its reception in the West German press. It begins with a discussion of the film and its visual depiction of Holocaust perpetrators. It then analyses the film's West German critical and audience reception, arguing that the film's focus on perpetrators from society's educated establishment was ahead of its time and led to negative reviews. Grounded in archival documents contained in the Joseph Wulf Library at the House of The Wannsee Conference Memorial and Educational Centre, as well as Paul Mommertz's private archive, it utilises the script, research material, and production and audience correspondence. This piece also relies on digitised newspaper archives in its section on the film's reception. Additionally, it utilises several oral history interviews conducted with Mommertz. I follow in the footsteps of historical film analysis outlined by Robert Toplin, who argues that historians should examine archival production documents such as scripts, correspondence, research material, and marginalia, as well as interview individual filmmakers.² These sources provide valuable insight into television production because they permit researchers to identify historiographical arguments which make their way into the film, whether through the screenplay, notes, bibliographies, or marginalia. They allow us to trace media historiographies via archival research rather than inferring them.³

The 20 January 1942 meeting which is now known as the Wannsee Conference was not the event where the Nazis made the decision to commit genocide. Instead, it was a key part of Reinhard Heydrich's effort to bring the German government's civilian ministries into line and place all "Jewish questions" under his control as head of the Reich Security Main Office (RSHA) and as Himmler's direct subordinate. At Wannsee, he called cabinet-level representatives of various ministries and agencies together to coordinate what the Third Reich government was calling the "Final Solution." The conference remains infamous because its surviving protocol stands as a key piece of evidence for the organisation of the Holocaust and the involvement of German bureaucracy. The historian Mark Roseman identifies it as a "signpost indicating that genocide had become official policy" and repeatedly refers to the protocol as a "keyhole" through which we can observe a transitional period in the history of the Holocaust.⁴

2 Die Wannseekonferenz (1984)

Die Wannseekonferenz was part of a wave of West German historical drama during the 1970s and 1980s. Public television networks had an educational mission (*Bildungsauftrag*) and during this period before private television networks, West German public television "defined the population's educational needs, and, among many other items, this educational agenda included the task of furthering *Vergangenheitsbewältigung*."⁵ According to Wulf Kansteiner, most West German depictions of the Holocaust focused on survival and rescue, making *Die Wannseekonferenz* one of a handful of perpetrator films.⁶ Frank Bösch has also correctly noted that *Die Wannseekonferenz* premiered almost a decade before any historical monographs on Wannsee, fitting with his argument that perpetrator films in this period "provoked the strongest questions about historical accuracy" among historians and prefigured later historiography.⁷ Additionally, West German perpetrator films during this period tended to be characterized by "observational distance" as opposed to more "intimate" films from later periods which focused on private aspects of the Third Reich.⁸ In this sense, *Die Wannseekonferenz* fits into a smaller subset of West German Holocaust films but stands out for its attempt at reenacting a historical event in real time.

Elvira Neuendank has pointed out films contain an "embedded pedagogy."⁹ According to screenwriter Paul Mommertz, the production team was committed to their educational mission but wanted to avoid overly didactic techniques. His film's embedded pedagogy was primarily contained in its dialogue:

I did not want to make [the film] didactic. I had already seen this didactic approach too often from the early days of historical films on television and of course I knew that it contradicted any artistic aspirations...Now I was actually lucky with the topic: I didn't have to make anything didactic, because the didactic aspect was in the thing itself... "This conference, in its discrepancy between the terrible subject matter and the way it is treated, is a tremendous

scandal, an unparalleled cynicism." People talked about mass killing in a blabbering tone or with bureaucratic coldness. The judgement about this forces itself upon the viewer, the message, the message arises from itself. I just had to present the facts, nothing more. And I could spare myself all the didacticism.¹⁰

Whether Mommertz only "presented the facts" is disputable, but his point about the film's didactic nature lying in the "thing itself" is key. The most valuable educational aspect of this film is not its rich detail about the participants and the prerogatives of every Nazi ministry, but its depiction how 'civilized,' 'ordinary men' discussed some of the most inhumane crimes imaginable. It is the depiction of the language of genocide itself and the inner workings of the Nazi regime which are most educationally valuable, not whether the filmmakers spell everything out for even the most inattentive viewer, which makes this film a valuable contribution to the historical—and Holocaust—film genres. My focus on screenwriting and dialogue is in keeping with the film historian and filmmaker Bruno Ramirez, who identifies screenwriting as the most important step in historical filmmaking.¹¹ Furthermore, Mommertz's stated rejection of overtly didactic forms of historical programming is in keeping with Edgar Lersch's thesis about German public television networks shifting towards more dramatic formats after NBC's *Holocaust* miniseries West German premiere.¹²

Die Wannseekonferenz is a dialogue-driven film. The characters speak in various registers and use vocabulary from the period, with the more educated attendees using flowery academic language, the SS using euphemisms for killing, and Nazi Party representatives using the language of the street. Devoid of onscreen depictions of violence, the film's power lies in its characters speaking to each other in a callous, flippant manner about genocide. Filmed in a distanced, "you are there" documentary style, the film functions as a dark mirror of *12 Angry Men*. Because most characters are referred to by rank, not name, it is harder to determine just who is speaking; individuals become avatars of their respective agencies and can seem like Nazi archetypes or even caricatures.¹³ Once Reinhard Heydrich (Dietrich Mattausch) arrives, he interrupts this chummy atmosphere when he calls all the SS representatives into a side room.



Video 1. Major Lange briefs Heydrich and the other RSHA men on mass shootings up to that point.

Major Rudolf Lange (Martin Lüttge) briefs Heydrich on recent *Einsatzgruppen* activity and shows a map of Europe depicting "Jew-free" countries. The map lists the numbers of murdered Jews and depicts coffins in occupied countries.

In this sequence, the filmmakers directly show a historical source on screen—though the historical source actually stems from February 1942, too late for it to have been shown at Wannsee.¹⁴ This visual representation of historical sources as icons underscores the film's intended aura of authenticity but also follows a longer tradition of television programming depicting Wannsee.

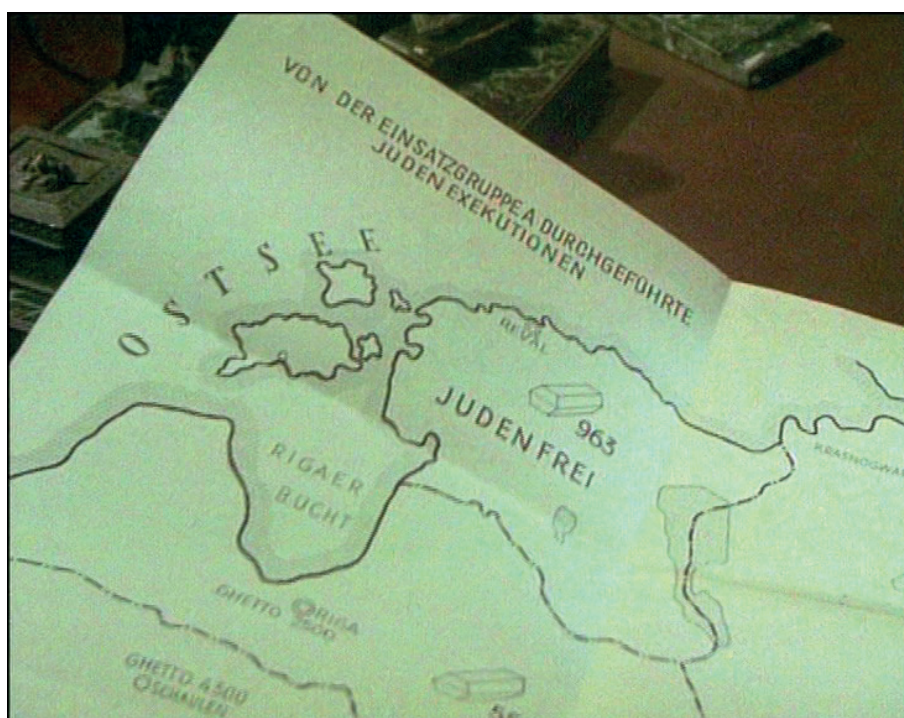


Figure 1. Lange presents the map of *Einsatzgruppe A* killings to Heydrich. A photocopy of the archival document is contained in the Paul Mommertz research archive.

At the start of the conference, it seems that the attendees are largely in agreement; there is little pushback, though Heydrich has no patience for what he sees as irrelevant civilian opinions. Throughout this section, he struts around the table and he cannot keep still. The script notes that Heydrich is to stick to bureaucratic language at the beginning to emphasise “the discrepancy between form and content.”¹⁵ Before a large map (Figure 2), he discusses the Jewish populations of various European countries, waving his wooden pointer around like a lion tamer or schoolteacher. In this sequence, the longest individual speech in the film, Heydrich uses the same population figures found in the protocol, but the filmmakers render these numbers visually via the dots on the map. During this section of the film, many of Heydrich’s statements such as “In the course of the practical implementation of the Final Solution, Europe will be combed from west to east”¹⁶ are direct quotes from the Wannsee Protocol.

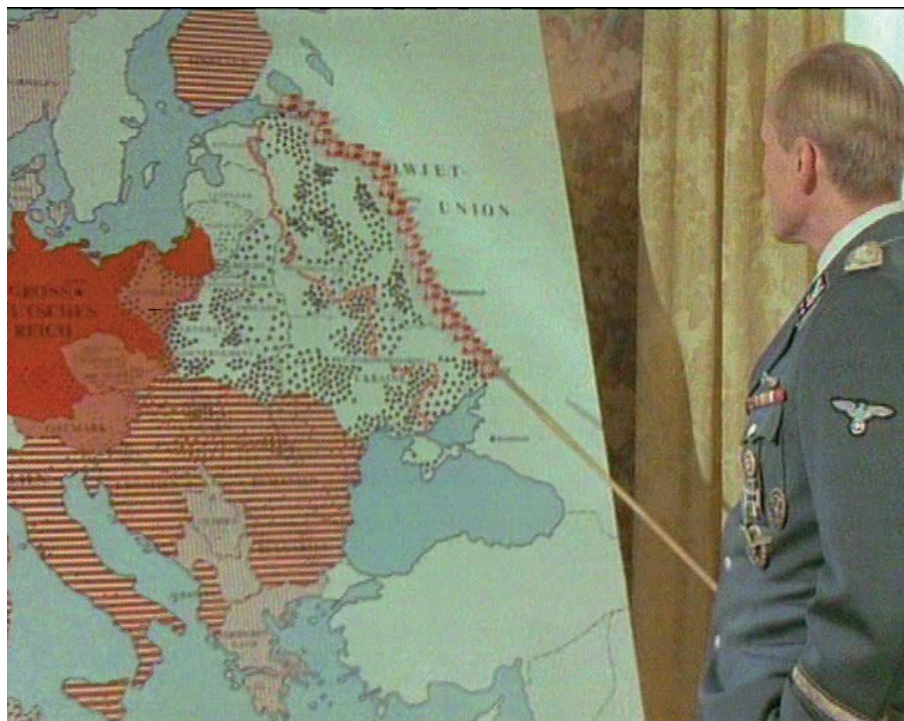


Figure 2. Heydrich (Dietrich Mattausch) lectures on the Jewish populations of Europe. The black dots represent the Jewish population listed in the Wannsee Protocol.

The film depicts the creation of the protocol, with Heydrich ordering the secretary (Anita Mally) to not write a verbatim transcript; Adolf Eichmann (Gerd Böckmann) asks her to strike various statements from the record. The script provided stage directions for this point.¹⁷

Echoing Hannah Arendt's characterisation of Eichmann as a detail-obsessed bureaucrat, Eichmann briefly discusses transportation. He is concerned with timetables, cost-efficiency, and speed.¹⁸ Lange, in contrast, is portrayed as a menacing yet clownlike figure: he talks about his experience conducting mass shootings in the East but falls asleep during Heydrich's presentation and constantly has to deal with his barking German shepherd. Clearly intended for comic relief, this character trait falls flat and appears dated.

The final section of the film concerns the Interior Ministry representative Wilhelm Stuckart (Peter Fitz), and the question of mixed marriages. Stuckart, who is sweating, sick with a cold and a bit tipsy, appears agitated and loses his composure at several points. The other attendees laugh at Stuckart when he defends the Nuremberg Laws against what he sees as arbitrary definitions of Jewishness and when he advocates for mass sterilisation instead of killing.¹⁹ Stuckart in *Die Wannseekonferenz* is, along with Friedrich Wilhelm Kritzinger (Franz Rudnick), side-lined by the SS and Party representatives; he is depicted as a man from another time who has no place in the new Nazi order, which contradicts his biography. Stuckart was a key Nazi legal theorist and persecuted Jews "with enthusiasm."²⁰ The film similarly depicts Kritzinger of the Reich Chancellery as an old-fashioned bureaucrat from the pre-Nazi era unprepared for the new realities of the younger, "uncompromising generation" staffing the RSHA.²¹ This is in keeping with recent historiographical depictions of Kritzinger.²²



Video 2. The film depicts Kritzing as a man whose time has passed. In this scene, the other participants dismiss him as an old pedant.

Whenever he questions Heydrich's plans and why he has not been included or informed, Heydrich and the SS either stare him down or verbally dismiss him (Figure 3). Kritzing appears flustered, doddering, and confused. Sometimes stammering, he constantly fiddles with his eyeglasses and shuffles papers. He reacts to discussions of mass killings with a shocked expression, emphasising his unpreparedness and irrelevance. His position at the end of the table both figuratively and literally illustrates Heydrich painting him into a corner, emphasising the Reich Chancellery's difficult position versus the RSHA.²³



Figure 3. The SS representatives eye Kritzing dismissively.

At one point, Kritzinger asks Heydrich about just how he plans to kill 11 million Jews via mass shooting during wartime. This section illustrates how Mommertz used primary sources to justify his historical argument about Wannsee. Heydrich responds with:

HEYDRICH: There are other methods.

MÜLLER: More elegant ones.

HEYDRICH: More humane ones. Read Adolf Hitler, *Mein Kampf*, page seven hundred and seventy-two in the first edition. And, gentlemen, learn to take the Führer at his word!²⁴

A befuddled Kritzinger stays behind with Stuckart as everyone else leaves the conference room and asks him what Heydrich meant. He responds with details about Hitler's wishes:

STUCKART (agonized): The evidence is piling up. He says it would be better to just put the members of the Hebrew people under poison gas.

KRITZINGER: Gas?

STUCKART (nods).²⁵

The film's focus on Hitler's decision-making, exemplified by the section from *Mein Kampf*, clearly advocated an intentionalist view of how the Holocaust unfolded, a position which argues that the mass murder of all European Jews was Hitler's plan from the beginning of his political career.²⁶ When Kritzinger appears on screen, a large bust of Hitler looms behind him (Figure 4), underscoring the filmmakers' intentionalist view.



Figure 4. Hitler looms over Kritzinger.

This reference to *Mein Kampf* proved controversial. In his review, Heinz Höhne claimed no such passage existed.²⁷ Mommertz's research files contain a photocopy of the *Mein Kampf* passage in question, underlined by Mommertz and

located on page 772 of the complete edition (both volumes) published in 1939, not the "first edition" as noted in the script.²⁸ The passage, contained in the fifteenth chapter of the second volume, is contained within a section on the First World War and Marxism. It advocated taking Jewish hostages and killing them with poison gas:

If at the beginning of and during the war, twelve or fifteen thousand of these Hebrew subverters of the people had been put under poison gas in the same way as hundreds of thousands of our very best German workers from all classes and professions had to endure in the field, then the sacrifice of millions at the front would not have been in vain.²⁹

Mommertz's handwritten comment at the bottom of the photocopied page reads "a possibility becomes visible."³⁰ The critical edition of *Mein Kampf* contains extensive commentary on this passage, which notes that Hitler expressed a desire to "physically exterminate" the Jews in numerous instances, including a speech at the Munich *Bürgerbräukeller* on 6 July 1920. The commentary continues, pointing out that such eliminationist rhetoric was common during the early years of the Nazi movement. Nevertheless, the editors concur with contemporary historians, who argue that this passage in *Mein Kampf* does not constitute a direct line between Hitler's early writings and the Holocaust, instead arguing that it was a gradual process.³¹ Contemporary historians, when discussing Hitler's genocidal ideas and aims, generally refer to Hitler's 30 January 1939 "prophecy" during a speech at the Reichstag in which he stated that the Second World War (inevitably caused by the Jews in his thinking) would mean the "annihilation of the Jewish race in Europe."³² Mommertz's emphasis on the *Mein Kampf* passage is the clearest indication of an intentionalist historiographical position; it involves taking Hitler's words seriously, but can falter when reading concrete policy goals into his rhetoric.

Die Wannseekonferenz was one of several experimental depictions of history on West German public television during the late 1970s and early 1980s. For example, Bavaria Film, the production company behind Mommertz and Schirk's 1977 film *Reinhard Heydrich: Manager of Terror*, also produced Rainer Werner Fassbinder's 14-part miniseries adaptation of Alfred Döblin's novel *Berlin Alexanderplatz*. 1977 also saw the release of two prominent West German productions depicting Nazi criminals, the documentary *Hitler: A Career*, directed and penned by the historian Joachim Fest, and Theodor Kotulla's *Death is My Trade*, a fictionalised biography of Auschwitz commandant Rudolf Höss. These earlier West German productions predate NBC's miniseries *Holocaust*, complicating conventional narratives about it being responsible for a shift in West German attitudes towards the Nazi era.³³ *Die Wannseekonferenz* fits within this group of films—although German public television at the time could be conservative politically, especially when it came to historical productions, this did not necessarily mean it was always conservative artistically. *Die Wannseekonferenz* does not forgive inattentive viewers; many lines of dialogue are packed with historical information and it is sometimes difficult to differentiate among the fifteen Nazi functionaries sitting around the table. The film succeeds at depicting the incongruity of the meeting's location with its subject matter, attendees constantly use "elegant" as an adjective, either to describe their surroundings or to cynically refer to deportation and killing methods. Unfortunately for its filmmakers, *Die Wannseekonferenz* proved to be too experimental for the West German press.

3 The Spiegel Debate

On 17 December 1984, *Der Spiegel* published a scathing review of *Die Wannseekonferenz*, which was slated to premiere on ARD two days later. The review, penned by the journalist and historian Heinz Höhne, repeatedly asserted that the film contained "fantastical" elements and characterised Paul Mommertz as a hysterical figure, fitting Frank Biess's depiction of West German anxieties about an "emotionalisation" of Holocaust memory in the wake of NBC's 1979 miniseries.³⁴ Titled "A Trap of Affectedness," the article's title directly quoted from correspondence Mommertz sent to historical advisor Shlomo Aronson during a dispute over the screenplay.³⁵ Höhne alleged that the Institute for Contemporary History (IfZ) staff "warned" Mommertz about the danger of creating a "horror piece" on the Wannsee Conference.³⁶ Höhne claimed that "historians" had concluded that Wannsee was relatively unimportant and merely about deportations to the East, while Mommertz (and the film) were overly emotional, moralistic, and exaggerated the

Wannsee Conference's importance. His review portrayed Mommertz as a prima donna screenwriter who refused to listen to the sober, factual assessments of Aronson and the historians at the IfZ. "This is not the Wannsee Conference as the historians know it. It is the Wannsee Conference a la Paul Mommertz."³⁷ Höhne, respected for his bestselling history of the SS, claimed that the source material for a film on the conference, let alone an academic work was too thin: "It is no coincidence that most historical writing on the Holocaust only has room for a few paragraphs on the Wannsee Conference."³⁸ Considering the historian Joseph Wulf's ill-fated efforts in the 1960s and early 1970s to convert the Wannsee villa into a research centre and memorial site, as well as start of more specialised scholarship on Wannsee only half a decade later, this was a strange argument.³⁹ More troubling is Höhne's characterisation of the protocol itself. Although he did not deny its authenticity, he gave *Spiegel* readers reasons to doubt utility as a source: "Even the protocol, today recognised as an authentic document, seemed fishy to historians for a long time, it's a strange paper in terms of form: no letterhead, no date, no signature."⁴⁰ Höhne did not have problems with filmic depictions of the Holocaust in general; he praised NBC's *Holocaust* miniseries, lauding its success and claiming it succeeded while historians had failed to raise public awareness about the Holocaust.⁴¹ Rather than distance himself from the film (as he initially wished), Shlomo Aronson actually sent a conciliatory letter to Mommertz praising the film and his work, however Höhne interpreted this letter as Aronson's desire to turn down the argument's heat. He called the film "a very impressive accomplishment in general" and that his misgivings were limited to the film relying too much on Eichmann's postwar statements and its mischaracterization of Stuckart as not fully on board with mass killings.⁴² Aronson also granted several interviews promoting the film, particularly for the American press.⁴³ Still, Mommertz noted that their personal relationship soured after this exchange and they never contacted each other again.⁴⁴ In this respect, Höhne's review, while correctly reporting on their rancorous exchange, mischaracterised Aronson's position.

Höhne's claims about both the conference's purpose and the protocol contradicted his earlier work. In his history of the SS, *The Order of the Death's Head*, Höhne discussed the conference in two sentences, arguing that after Wannsee, "Eichmann had only one aim in life—to be death's most reliable and indefatigable collector and transport agent." If this were the case, the conference certainly could not have only been about deportation. In this passage, he cited Raul Hilberg's account of the conference in *The Destruction of the European Jews*, a book which also served as a starting point for Mommertz when writing his screenplay.⁴⁵ In stark opposition to Höhne's overly literal (and overly charitable) interpretation of the protocol in his review, Hilberg's account makes clear that Heydrich and others talked about killing, not merely deportation. Hilberg addresses the protocol's language as well: the euphemisms in the protocol were indeed euphemisms for mass killing, they "[created] a myth" among German officials; "[t]hese terms were not the product of naïveté; they were convenient tools of psychological repression."⁴⁶ In other words, this type of language, which emphasised deportation, allowed perpetrators to deny what was really happening—it provided both plausible deniability and eased their psychological burdens. In later statements, Höhne also criticised what he saw as the German press' tendency to overstate Heydrich's importance. While this specific criticism is not present in his review, it may help explain his position.⁴⁷

It is important to keep in mind the wider context of Höhne's review. His history of the SS, *The Order of the Death's Head*, received wide acclaim; it offered a "differentiated" view of the SS in contrast with earlier depictions that relied on its wartime reputation as an organisation filled with criminals and sadists.⁴⁸ However, contemporary historians have criticised Höhne for uncritically reproducing statements by Waffen-SS veterans in his work.⁴⁹ Andreas Eichmüller also shows that Joseph Wulf was supposed to write the *Spiegel* article series which later became *The Order of the Death's Head*, but Höhne replaced him—Wulf strongly criticised the finished series.⁵⁰ Additionally, Höhne had written a 1974 documentary for *Westdeutsche Rundfunk* (WDR) titled *Männer unter dem Totenkopf*. This documentary praised the Waffen-SS as an elite military organisation and attempted to separate them from the SS as a whole, and to distance Waffen-SS veterans from Nazi crimes. It strongly relied on testimony from Waffen-SS veterans, including from *Stern-TV* producer Wolfgang Venohr, who collaborated with Höhne on the documentary.⁵¹ Recent research also shows that many early *Spiegel* reporters and editors had previously worked in the SS, SD, Abwehr, and Propaganda Ministry. Although Höhne was not an SS member himself, he was part of a wider institutional culture that employed former members of Nazi intelligence and propaganda units in the 1950s and 1960s. This is not to accuse *Spiegel* of being a secret Nazi organisation, but, as media historian Lutz Hachmeister

has stated, to explore the "discrepancy" between the magazine's anti-establishment, anti-fascist image and the pasts of its early employees, as well as the "double standard" displayed by *Spiegel* when exposing the Nazi pasts of prominent members of West German society.⁵²

In what Mommertz has described as an unusual move, *Spiegel* let him respond to Höhne's review at length in its January 1985 issue. Here, he argued that he had worked as a historian and that Höhne had demonstrated ignorance about Wannsee.⁵³ Mommertz directly accused Höhne of utilising "apologetical" argumentation methods common on the far-right and noted that *Einsatzgruppen* reports about mass shootings widely circulated within the German government; this was proof that attendees knew about the murder campaign and could not convincingly claim ignorance: "all knew about the mass shootings in the East."⁵⁴ Mommertz continued his rebuttal by outlining each Wannsee attendee's plausible knowledge at the time of the conference. In his key passage, Mommertz fired a shot across Höhne's bow, arguing that the idea of agreed-upon language rules would have been absurd, arguing that "[i]t is completely unrealistic and out of touch with life to assume that Heydrich had agreed upon or assumed that he had agreed upon a set of language rules with the majority of the conference participants."⁵⁵ This argument echoes Raul Hilberg's interpretation of Wannsee, which notes that Heydrich, as ordered by Göring, "was to act in co-operation with other agencies which had jurisdiction in these matters," which meant agencies responsible for issues like mixed marriages, the labour question, and Jews living outside of the Reich. Hilberg argues that Wannsee was meant to cut through red tape and questions of which agencies held authority over Jews; previously, Heydrich had encountered pushback from various ministries and agencies and Wannsee was meant to streamline anti-Jewish policy.⁵⁶ Mommertz ended his piece with a parting shot, emphasising his years of research:

Finally, Mr. Höhne calls the sources for the Wannsee Conference meagre. I have six folders with original documents from the conference and its context. I am a historian as well. Perhaps it is conceivable that after 14 months of special study in a particular subject area, one historian is a little ahead of other historians.⁵⁷

Here, Mommertz rejected a false dichotomy between historians and filmmakers; that history belongs to those who write books. Arguing that filmmakers simply translate the work of historians is difficult to maintain when one notes that Mommertz had no historical monographs on Wannsee to consult, only smaller sections of publications and the then-available primary sources.

By casting doubt on the Wannsee Protocol's provenance, Höhne was—whether intentionally or not—opening the door to viewpoints common among the far right and Holocaust deniers in West Germany's flagship periodical. The historian Christian Mentel has documented the origins and methods behind denialist attempts to discredit the Wannsee Protocol, including the claim about the document not having an appropriate letterhead and file number.⁵⁸ Mentel has also noted that the notorious Holocaust denier David Irving claimed that the conference was merely about organising deportations.⁵⁹ Later in the 1980s, the right wing historian Ernst Nolte also cast doubt on the protocol's authenticity, even going so far as to question whether or not the Wannsee Conference even took place—arguing in an endnote that Heydrich may not have even been present and that historians had abandoned their objectivity by supposedly uncritically accepting Wannsee as fact.⁶⁰ In her influential work *Denying the Holocaust*, American historian Deborah Lipstadt traced how conservative historians like Nolte helped denialist viewpoints enter supposedly respectable historiography, arguing that Nolte and historians with similar arguments "are not crypto-deniers, but the results of their work are the same: the blurring of boundaries between fact and fiction and between persecuted and persecutor."⁶¹ It is ironic that Höhne accused Mommertz of unethically blending fact and fiction while simultaneously alluding to revisionist and denialist claims about Wannsee, thereby giving their dangerous ideas access to *Spiegel*'s vast audience.

On 16 January 1985, the film's producer Manfred Korytowski, a Jewish refugee who had returned to West Germany, sent a scathing letter directly to Höhne.⁶² Korytowski began by expressing deep disappointment, stating that his review was:

...either beside the point wrong or dangerous in all points - dangerous because it puts grist on the mills of the neo-Nazis and the unteachable, whose embarrassing applause you are now certain to receive. But that is your problem.⁶³

Korytowski expressed puzzlement regarding Höhne's characterisation of Shlomo Aronson's behaviour, arguing that if Aronson wanted to distance himself from the film, he would not have agreed to be credited as its historical advisor: "[This is] a strange kind of distancing. Who is the 'fantasist' now? In any case, this example is typical of your speculations." Korytowski also charged Höhne with "providing ammunition" to Holocaust deniers and traditionalist conservatives, then speculated about the true motivations behind Höhne's review:

The so-called better circles of that era had a grace period in the television medium up until now. My film has put an end to that. I guess you don't forgive something like that. Perhaps that is the real explanation for the irritated reactions in editorial offices.⁶⁴

Korytowski was not finished. On the last page of his letter, he turned to his more personal reasons for writing a response:

I myself am Jewish and a victim of racial persecution. I lost my family members in the Holocaust. It would be an insult not only to these victims if I were to make a sloppy film about the events that led to their death. The subject is too serious for that, Mr. Höhne! I seriously ask myself if my decision to return to Germany, the country of my birth, where the memory of terrible truths, the confrontation of them, and the shame about them hides behind unqualified dogmatism, was the correct one.⁶⁵

4 Audience Reactions

In addition to Korytowski's letter, the Mommertz collection also contains letters sent to *Der Spiegel* founder Rudolf Augstein by readers in support of the film, as well as others sent to the filmmakers. One writer described herself as a Holocaust survivor and claims that Höhne's "tone betrays an almost unbearable degree of schoolmasterliness and know-it-allism" and charged him with dishonesty and sloppy historical work:

Is the inability to mourn replaced by the typically German capability of creating a mountain of refuge out of scientific and pseudo-scientific arguments, behind whose protective walls one can confidently stand up straight and right oneself?⁶⁶

This writer also claimed that Höhne's review was an exercise in journalistic "execution" of Mommertz:

there is no question in my mind that a double execution has taken place here - namely of a subject, the thematisation of an important part of contemporary history, and of a person, namely the [screen]writer.⁶⁷

These two letters illustrate the reactions of two Jewish Germans to what they saw as (gentile) German evasiveness about Nazi crimes veering into apologia and providing intellectual cover for Holocaust deniers. Their anger towards Höhne and *Spiegel* is palpable and serves as an indication of 1980s debates about historical memory: there was no "German" response to the Holocaust; but German "responses," which included those from German Jews. Average Germans watched *Die Wannseekonferenz* and responded to it with letters to *Der Spiegel*, the production team, and the networks. These responses included letters from still-living Nazis, as surviving correspondence indicates, but also included positive feedback from prominent West German politicians, including the conservative Bavarian Minister President Franz Josef Strauss, who promised to make the Bavarian *Landeszentrale für politische Bildungsarbeit* aware of the film but noted that it would depend on if the film was "didactically appropriate."⁶⁸ It is unclear if the *Landeszentrale* ultimately included the film in its program. Jürgen Böddrich, a social democratic member of the Bavarian parliament, sent Mommertz a similar letter, stating that

[t]he exposure of so-called 'high carat people' in their inhumanity has convinced me very much. For this taboo violation, I am very grateful to you and I also hope that you will continue to not let anyone intimidate you.⁶⁹

Negative letters included hate mail from Holocaust deniers and unreconstructed Nazis. Their combative, threatening tone also helps place Mommertz's and Korytowski's forceful responses to Höhne's review in context. One postcard called the film "the most disgusting kind of propaganda" and claimed that the real Wannsee Protocol had never been published.⁷⁰ Another postcard, sent directly to Mommertz, called him a "useful Bolshevik idiot," a "demagogue" and claimed the film was a complete lie.⁷¹ In a letter sent to Mommertz a full year after the film's premiere, a woman ranted about German victimhood and claimed that the "true history" would one day be brought to light.⁷² Most disturbing of all is a letter sent to Mommertz by a Dutch Waffen-SS veteran living near Hamburg. This letter praises the authentic language used in the film and lauds the film for depicting what he saw as the great achievements of the SS, arguing that Germany had degenerated into a society "where left-wing elements contaminate life."⁷³ He continued with his misplaced praise, claiming that the film showed things as they were, but not in the way the filmmakers intended:

...it was the greatest thing, to be allowed to experience that unfortunately extinct world again! Without ridiculous re-education hypocrisy, without socialist babble, without everything from the left, nothing red, nothing green, no third world, no rock and pop, but only and totally our SS. And its quite beautiful simplicity on the one hand, its unmatched effectiveness on the other!⁷⁴

The writer wanted *Bayerische Rundfunk* to create more films about "SS topics" including Otto Skorzeny's rescue of Mussolini, the Malmedy Massacre, and the "true story" about the July 1944 massacre at Oradour-sur-Glane.⁷⁵ Finally, and most chillingly, he says that if he lived in Munich, he would gladly "advise [Mommertz] on SS matters" for future film projects. He thanked Mommertz again and signed the letter in the name of the SS.⁷⁶

ARD continued to receive letters when they aired the film in subsequent years. One 1992 letter alleges that the Wannsee Protocol was a fake document created by the Allies, a common denialist claim. It also uses the same discredited claims about the document's supposed dubiousness mentioned in Höhne's review:

[the protocol] bears no file number, no signature, no handwritten notations, no other evidence, no header, and is written on a paper format not commonly used in Germany (not a DIN standard)!⁷⁷

Another letter from 1992 engages in similar denialist arguments but claims that the conference could not have taken place because the 1957 and 1963 editions of the *Brockhaus* encyclopaedia failed to mention the conference in their respective entries on the Wannsee lake.⁷⁸

A small group of people, some of whom were on the political left, some of whom were either Holocaust survivors or the children of Holocaust survivors, and some who were ordinary Germans advocated for films and other forms of *Vergangenheitsbewältigung* within a larger society that was either indifferent or actively opposed to those efforts. The shrill, threatening letters from deniers and old Nazis also illustrate the political climate of the time—it is little wonder that the filmmakers were afraid of lawsuits if they named all of the Wannsee participants in the film, especially considering that three were still alive during the film's pre-production:—the Wannsee Conference participant Gerhard Klopfer died in 1987 and his obituary praised him as a man "who passed away after a fulfilled life in the service of all those in his sphere of influence."⁷⁹ A society where such an obituary could be printed for a Wannsee Conference participant like Klopfer is certainly one where filmmakers working for Bavarian public television would feel the need to exercise caution and underscores the fact that such a film was provocative, even if other West German television productions had also depicted perpetrators.

Further West German journalistic reception tended to follow Höhne's lead without making any original points. In general, these reviews charged the film with inaccuracy, demonisation, engaging in stereotypes, and implied a hidden, unexplained motive on the part of the filmmakers, as if the film was some sort of stealth propaganda piece.⁸⁰ Despite the largely negative reaction to the film in the West German press, the West German film community lauded it with awards and the film regularly aired on German public television in subsequent years. Paul Mommertz won the 1985 DAG (German Salaried Employees' Union) Television Prize, as well as the Grimme-Preis.

5 Conclusion

The playwright and critic Rolf Hochhuth, most famous for his classic 1963 drama *The Deputy*, which depicts the efforts of SS officer Kurt Gestein to inform the Vatican about the Holocaust, reviewed the film for the Swiss weekly *Die Weltwoche*. Titled "The Impossibility of Atonement," Hochhuth's review is the most prominent positive review of the film in German from this period. He sharply criticised Höhne's assertions about the protocol, arguing that all Wannsee participants had damned themselves and knew exactly what "Final Solution" meant after years of Hitler's "prophecies." Hochhuth forcefully argued about the impossibility of "coming to terms" with Germany's past:

There is no coming to terms with the past [*Vergangenheitsbewältigung*], it is **nefarious** to talk about survivors and accomplices being able to "come to terms" with what was done to murdered people... This film was a renewed reminder of that. [Such films] must always happen again. Not only in Germany. But everywhere where anti-Semites and those who hate minorities live. Pre-Christmas days are exactly the right time for such broadcasts. Germans have finally made such a film themselves – after shamefully leaving making 'Holocaust' up to the foreigners.⁸¹

Hochhuth's review is notable for its attention to the wider societal issues at stake. His paradoxical argument: coming to terms with the past is impossible, but we still must attempt to do so, reinforces the fact that Germany's oft-lauded, oft-derided culture of memory was never uncontested, never inevitable, but it was no accident of history either. It was the result of the work of outsiders who went against the grain of West German society, which largely preferred silence and moving on.⁸² The people conducting memory work came from a variety of backgrounds, but one strand connects them: they were working outside of—or came from outside—the mainstream, and they did not always produce work to appeal to the average German. This is an important lesson for public history professionals and educators: not every historical project or work of historical memory must appeal to the widest possible number of people. Whether outsiders like Korytowski, who, while a prominent film producer, was still an outsider by virtue of his background as a Jewish exile, or Mommertz, who, as a playwright and screenwriter almost exclusively concerned with the Holocaust, was also outside the mainstream of West German television—these people also helped keep the memory of the Holocaust alive in a society that was reluctant to.

The West German press reception of *Die Wannseekonferenz* was fundamentally poisoned from the start by Höhne's negative review in *Der Spiegel*. Most critics in prominent newspapers followed his lead, thereby repeating his assertions about Wannsee. Many of these reviews were tinged by a fundamental scepticism towards depicting the Holocaust on film and relied on a pedantic definition of accuracy, implying that depicting Nazi perpetrators speaking as Nazis actually spoke amounted to overblown demonisation. When one notes the influence of Holocaust survivors on the production and the vehement West German critical reaction, the situation appears as a farcical rehash of an oft-repeated post-war dynamic when it came to representing or researching the Holocaust: West German conservatives characterised Jewish voices (and those of their allies) as unobjective, undifferentiated, sensationalist, and using mass media to trick ostensibly innocent and passive German audiences. In contrast, these critics cited nameless German historians to represent "objectivity," sober-mindedness, and "the facts," which they set up as diametrically opposed to efforts to remember the Holocaust.⁸³ Chastened by these critiques, the film's producers undertook a stronger PR-campaign for the film's international release, which proved much more successful. Nevertheless, it is important to also recognise that in spite of the film's initial negative reception in the press, the West German television community embraced the film as evidenced by its awards and subsequent re-airings. There was no uniformly negative West German attitude towards the film, but rather a **journalistic** rejection of it. Inspired by the West German film, HBO released its own version of the Wannsee Conference in 2001, *Conspiracy*, and in January 2022, ZDF released a new film about Wannsee, *The Conference*, which, in contrast with its predecessor, was also accompanied by extensive **educational material** for both viewers and teachers wishing to show the film in the classroom.⁸⁴ In the end, *Die Wannseekonferenz* serves as a valuable example of historical filmmaking and of a West German attempt at Holocaust education via television drama.

Notes

1. Heinz Höhne, "Eine Falle der Betroffenheit" [A Trap of Affectedness], *Der Spiegel*, December 17, 1984, <http://www.spiegel.de/spiegel/print/d-13511955.html>.
2. Robert Brent Toplin, "Cinematic History: Where Do We Go From Here?," *The Public Historian* 25, no. 3 (2003): 86–87.
3. Production archive sources must also be viewed critically, because the Mommertz archive is a curated selection of research material and correspondence collected by the Mommertz and the film's executive producer Manfred Korytowski. Some sections of the archive (specifically the section on reception) contain introductory material clearly designed to paint Mommertz in the best light; but an analysis of his arguments versus those of his detractors tends to confirm his assertions. It should be kept in mind that screenplays are never the works of *auteur*-like screenwriters but instead are always products of collaboration.
4. Mark Roseman, *The Villa, The Lake, The Meeting: Wannsee and the Final Solution* (London: Allen Lane, 2002), 106–107.
5. Wulf Kansteiner, *In Pursuit of German Memory: History, Television, and Politics After Auschwitz* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2006), 110–111. *Vergangenheitsbewältigung* is most commonly translated as "coming to terms with the past" or "overcoming the past."
6. *Ibid.*, 115–116.
7. Frank Bösch, "Film, NS-Vergangenheit und Geschichtswissenschaft. Von „Holocaust“ zu „Der Untergang“" [Film, the Nazi Past, and the historical discipline. From 'Holocaust' to 'Downfall'], *Vierteljahreshefte für Zeitgeschichte* 55, no. 1 (2007): 1–32, 9.
8. Axel Bangert, *The Nazi Past in Contemporary German Film: Viewing Experiences of Intimacy and Immersion* (Woodbridge, Suffolk: Boydell & Brewer, 2014), 58.
9. Elvira Neuendank, *Film als pädagogisches Setting: ein Medium als Vermittlungs- und Vergegenwärtigungsinstanz* [Film as Pedagogical Setting: A Medium as Instance of Conveyance and Visualisation] (Bielefeld: transcript, 2022), 9.
10. Interview with Paul Mommertz, 16 November 2018, 35:46–37:19.
11. See Bruno Ramirez, *Inside the Historical Film* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2014).
12. Lersch, Edgar, "Vom „SS-Staat“ Zu „Auschwitz“ | Zeitgeschichte | Online," *zeitgeschichte online*, March 1, 2004, <https://zeitgeschichte-online.de/themen/vom-ss-staat-zu-auschwitz>, 2.
13. This was deliberate as several Wannsee Conference participants were still alive during filming. The script refers to these characters by name, but the dialogue usually only refers to them by rank.
14. See the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum's digitised copy of the map: <https://collections.ushmm.org/search/catalog/pa1177426>
15. Mommertz, *Die Wannseekonferenz*, Drehbuch von Paul Mommertz [The Wannsee Conference, Script from Paul Mommertz], 1983, Bestand Paul Mommertz, Josef-Wulf Mediothek, Gedenk- und Bildungsstätte Haus der Wannsee-Konferenz, Berlin, 39.
16. *Ibid.*, 61.
17. *Ibid.*, 38.
18. *Ibid.*, 63–65.
19. For a discussion of Stuckart's arguments at Wannsee, see Mark Roseman, *The Wannsee Conference and the Final Solution: A Reconsideration* (London: Folio Society, 2012), 101–105.
20. Hans-Christian Jasch, "Wilhelm Stuckart (1902–1953), Reich Interior Ministry: 'A Legal Pedant'" in *The Participants: The Men of the Wannsee Conference*, eds. Hans-Christian Jasch and Christoph Kreutzmüller (Oxford and New York: Berghahn Books, 2017), 301–320, 312.
21. See Michael Wildt, *An Uncompromising Generation: The Nazi Leadership of the Reich Security Main Office*, trans. Tom Lampert, 1st edition (Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 2010).
22. Stefan Paul-Jacobs and Lore Kleiber, "Friedrich Wilhelm Kritzinger, Reich-Chancellery: A Prussian Civil Servant under the Nazi Regime" in *The Participants: The Men of the Wannsee Conference*, eds. Hans-Christian Jasch and Christoph Kreutzmüller (Oxford and New York: Berghahn Books, 2017), 207–223, 207.
23. Mark Roseman, *The Wannsee Conference and the Final Solution: A Reconsideration* (London: Folio Society, 2012), 93–95.
24. Mommertz, *Die Wannseekonferenz*, Drehbuch, 125.
25. *Ibid.*, 125–126.
26. For a discussion of intentionalism, see Charles S. Maier, *The Unmasterable Past: History, Holocaust, and German National Identity* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1988), esp. Chapter 3, "A Holocaust like the Others? Problems of Comparative History."
27. Höhne, "Eine Falle der Betroffenheit."
28. Paul Mommertz, Photocopy of *Mein Kampf* Pages "Auswahl aus Texten zur 'Genesis' des Holocaust und der Wannseekonferenz" [Selections from texts on the 'Genesis' of the Holocaust and the Wannsee Conference], in Ordner 2, "Historische Vorarbeit zum Drehbuch" [Historical Groundwork for the Screenplay], Kapitel 1600 "Dokumente NS-Rassenpolitik" [Documents on Nazi Racial Policy], Bestand Paul Mommertz, Josef-Wulf Mediothek, Gedenk- und Bildungsstätte Haus der Wannsee-Konferenz, Berlin.

29. Adolf Hitler, *Hitler, Mein Kampf: Eine kritische Edition* [Mein Kampf: A Critical Edition], ed. Christian Hartmann et al., vol. 2 (München: Institut für Zeitgeschichte München - Berlin IfZ, 2017), 1719.
30. Paul Mommertz, Photocopy of *Mein Kampf* Pages "Auswahl aus Texten zur 'Genesis' des Holocaust und der Wannseekonferenz.
31. Christian Hartmann et al., eds., *Hitler, Mein Kampf: Eine kritische Edition*, vol. 2, 1718, note 73.
32. Adolf Hitler, quoted in David Cesarani, *Final Solution: The Fate of the Jews 1933–1949* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2016), 222. For more on Hitler's "prophecy," see David Cesarani, *Final Solution: The Fate of the Jews 1933–1949* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2016), 221–22; Saul Friedländer, *Nazi Germany and the Jews, Volume 2, 1939–1945: The Years of Extermination* (New York: Harper Perennial, 2008), 273. Cesarani claims that the speech was "prophetic but not programmatic," while Friedländer places much more emphasis on it, repeatedly referring to the "prophecy" throughout *The Years of Extermination*. Hitler did repeat his "prophecy" throughout the war in various speeches and statements. Friedländer probably stands as the best representative of a contemporary "qualified intentionalist" position.
33. For two fantastic summaries of *Holocaust* and West German memory culture, see the chapters devoted to the series and its reception in Frank Bösch, *Zeitenwende 1979: Als die Welt von heute begann* [Turning Point 1979: How the World from Today Began] (Munich: Beck C. H., 2019); Frank Biess, *Republik der Angst: Eine andere Geschichte der Bundesrepublik*, [Republic of Fear: A Different History of the Federal Republic] (Reinbek: Rowohlt, 2019).
34. Frank Biess, *Republik der Angst*, 332–342.
35. Most of this correspondence is contained in the Paul Mommertz archival collections. Some correspondence from Aronson is missing. His private papers are currently being processed by the Massuah Institute for the Study of the Holocaust and are unavailable at the time of this writing.
36. Heinz Höhne, "Eine Falle der Betroffenheit."
37. Ibid.
38. Ibid.
39. For Joseph Wulf's efforts and wish to found a memorial in the Wannsee Villa, which the city of Berlin only fulfilled over a decade after his 1974 suicide, see Katie Digan, *Places of Memory: The Case of the House of the Wannsee Conference* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014), 29–38, and Steven Lehrer, *Wannsee House and the Holocaust* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Company, 2000). For a discussion of historiographical developments around the Wannsee Conference and the Holocaust, including Soviet archives, see Mark Roseman, *The Wannsee Conference and the Final Solution: A Reconsideration* (London: Folio Society, 2012), 6–7.
40. Heinz Höhne, "Eine Falle der Betroffenheit."
41. Heinz Höhne, "Schwarzer Freitag für die Historiker" [Black Friday for the Historians], *Der Spiegel*, January 21, 1979, <https://www.spiegel.de/spiegel/print/d-40350862.html>. See also his letter to the editor where he criticized Guido Knopp for overestimating Heydrich's importance: "Hochgekochte Legenden" [Cooked-up Legends], in *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, 20 November 2002.
42. Shlomo Aronson, Letter to Paul Mommertz, 11 April 1984, Private Archive Paul Mommertz, Munich, 1–2.
43. See R. Jill Bradshaw, "Israeli Professor at UCLA Lends Expertise to German Film," *L.A. Reader*, February 26, 1987.
44. Interview with Paul Mommertz, 16 November 2018, 43:58–45:23.
45. Heinz Höhne, *The Order of the Death's Head: The Story of Hitler's SS* (London: Penguin Books, 2000), 391–392.
46. Raul Hilberg, *The Destruction of the European Jews* (Chicago: Quadrangle Books, 1961), 265–266.
47. Höhne, "Hochgekochte Legenden."
48. Andreas Eichmüller, "'Auf das Typische kommt es an.' Bilder und Narrative der SS in Film und Fernsehen in den 1970er-Jahren" [Images and Narratives of the SS in Film and Television in the 1970s], in *Die SS nach 1945: Entschuldungsnarrative, populäre Mythen, europäische Erinnerungsdiskurse* [The SS after 1945, exculpatory narratives, popular myths, European discourses of remembrance], eds. Jan Erik Schulte and Michael Wildt (Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2018), 289–309, 290.
49. Karsten Wilke, *Die "Hilfsgemeinschaft auf Gegenseitigkeit" (HIAG) 1950 – 1990. Veteranen der Waffen-SS in der Bundesrepublik* [Waffen-SS Veterans in the Federal Republic of Germany] (Paderborn: Schöningh, 2011), 387–388. See also Jan Erik Schulte, "Namen sind Nachrichten: Journalismus und NS-Täterforschung in der frühen Bundesrepublik Deutschland" [Names are News: Journalism and Nazi Perpetrator Research in the early Federal Republic of Germany] in *Public History: Öffentliche Darstellungen des Nationalsozialismus jenseits der Geschichtswissenschaft* [Public Historians: Public Depictions of National Socialism beyond Academic History], eds. Frank Bösch and Constantin Goschler (Frankfurt and New York: Campus, 2009), 24–51, 43–48.
50. Eichmüller, "'Auf das Typische kommt es an,' 294, footnote 19.
51. Ibid, 294.
52. See Lutz Hachmeister, "Ein deutsches Nachrichtenmagazin - Der frühe 'Spiegel' und sein NS-Personal" [A German News Magazine – The Early 'Spiegel' and its Nazi Personnel], in *Die Herren Journalisten. Die Elite der deutschen Presse nach 1945*, ed. Friedemann Siering and Lutz Hachmeister [The Gentlemen Journalists. The German Press' Elite after 1945] (Munich: C.H.Beck Verlag, 2002), 87–120, 117–118.

53. Author Interview with Paul Mommertz, 16 November 2018, 21:33–23:47; Paul Mommertz, "Völlig unrealistisch und Lebensfremd" [Completely Unrealistic and out of Touch with Life], *Der Spiegel*, December 31, 1984, <http://www.spiegel.de/spiegel/print/d-13511955.html>.
54. Ibid.
55. Ibid.
56. Raul Hilberg, *The Destruction of the European Jews* (Chicago: Quadrangle Books, 1961), 263.
57. Mommertz, "Völlig unrealistisch und Lebensfremd."
58. Christian Mentel, "Das Protokoll der Wannsee-Konferenz. Überlieferung, Veröffentlichung und revisionistische Infragestellung" [The Wannsee Conference Protocol. Provenance, Publication and revisionist Challenge], in *Die Wannsee-Konferenz am 20. Januar 1942: Dokumente, Forschungsstand, Kontroversen* [The Wannsee Conference of 20 January 1942: Documents, State of Research, Controversies], eds. Norbert Kampe and Peter Klein (Köln: Böhlau Köln, 2013), 116–138, 130–131.
59. Mentel, "Das Protokoll der Wannsee-Konferenz," 116–138, 132–133.
60. Ernst Nolte, *Der europäische Bürgerkrieg 1917–1945: Nationalsozialismus und Bolschewismus*, [The European Civil War 1917–1945: National Socialism and Bolshevism] 5th edition, September 1997 (Munich: F. A. Herbig Verlagsbuchhandlung GmbH, 1997), 470. See endnote 26, pages 541–42.
61. Deborah Lipstadt, *Denying the Holocaust: The Growing Assault on Truth and Memory* (New York: Penguin, 1994), 214–215.
62. Korytowski, Letter to Heinz Höhne, 1.
63. Ibid, 1.
64. Ibid, 3.
65. Ibid.
66. Liselotte J., Letter to Rudolf Augstein, 23 December 1984, in Ordner 1 "Dokumentation zum Film," Kapitel 300, "Der Autor," Bestand Paul Mommertz, Josef-Wulf Mediothek, Gedenk- und Bildungsstätte Haus der Wannsee-Konferenz, Berlin, 1.
67. Ibid, 1.
68. Franz Josef Strauss, Letter to Manfred Korytowski, 25 March 1985, in Ordner 1 "Dokumentation zum Film," Kapitel 700, "Zuschauerpost (Auswahl)," Bestand Paul Mommertz, Josef-Wulf Mediothek, Gedenk- und Bildungsstätte Haus der Wannsee-Konferenz, Berlin, 1–2.
69. Jürgen Böddrich, Letter to Paul Mommertz, 15 January 1985, in Ordner 1 "Dokumentation zum Film," Kapitel 700, "Zuschauerpost (Auswahl)," Bestand Paul Mommertz, Josef-Wulf Mediothek, Gedenk- und Bildungsstätte Haus der Wannsee-Konferenz, Berlin, 1.
70. Postcard sent to ARD, undated. in Ordner 1 "Dokumentation zum Film," Kapitel 700, "Zuschauerpost (Auswahl)," Bestand Paul Mommertz, Josef-Wulf Mediothek, Gedenk- und Bildungsstätte Haus der Wannsee-Konferenz, Berlin, 1.
71. Jörg R., Letter to Paul Mommertz, postmarked 28 December 1984. in Ordner 1 "Dokumentation zum Film," Kapitel 700, "Zuschauerpost (Auswahl)," Bestand Paul Mommertz, Josef-Wulf Mediothek, Gedenk- und Bildungsstätte Haus der Wannsee-Konferenz, Berlin, 1.
72. Hildegard K., Letter to Paul Mommertz, 24 January 1985. in Ordner 1 "Dokumentation zum Film," Kapitel 700, "Zuschauerpost (Auswahl)," Bestand Paul Mommertz, Josef-Wulf Mediothek, Gedenk- und Bildungsstätte Haus der Wannsee-Konferenz, Berlin, 1.
73. John B., Letter to Paul Mommertz, 20 December 1983, in Ordner 1 "Dokumentation zum Film," Kapitel 700, "Zuschauerpost (Auswahl)," Bestand Paul Mommertz, Josef-Wulf Mediothek, Gedenk- und Bildungsstätte Haus der Wannsee-Konferenz, Berlin, 1.
74. Ibid, 1–2.
75. Ibid, 3.
76. Ibid, 4.
77. Dietrich M., Letter to ARD, postmarked 20 January 1992. in Ordner 1 "Dokumentation zum Film," Kapitel 700, "Zuschauerpost (Auswahl)," Bestand Paul Mommertz, Josef-Wulf Mediothek, Gedenk- und Bildungsstätte Haus der Wannsee-Konferenz, Berlin, 1.
78. Rüdiger W., Letter to ARD, 19 February 1992, in Ordner 1 "Dokumentation zum Film," Kapitel 700, "Zuschauerpost (Auswahl)," Bestand Paul Mommertz, Josef-Wulf Mediothek, Gedenk- und Bildungsstätte Haus der Wannsee-Konferenz, Berlin, 1.
79. *Südwest-Presse*, 2 February 1987, quoted in Markus Heckmann, "Gerhard Klopfer, Nazi Party Chancellor - A Nationalist Ideologue and a Respectable West German," in *The Participants: The Men of the Wannsee Conference*, 1st ed. (Oxford: New York: Berghahn Books, 2017), 189–206, 189.
80. See Birgit Weidinger, "Hackenschlagen" [Sidestepping], *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, December 21, 1984; "Das Streiflicht" [The Grazing Light], *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, 21 December 1984; Karl-Ludwig Baader, "Eiskalter Engel in der Herrenrunde" [Ice-cold Angel at the Roundtable], *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, 21 December 1984; Robert W. Kempner, "Unsinnige Darstellung im Stammtisch-Milieu" [Senseless Depiction at the Pub Regular's Table], *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, January 5, 1985.
81. Rolf Hochhuth, "Die Unmöglichkeit der Sühne" [The Impossibility of Atonement], *Die Weltwoche*, December 27, 1984.

82. With the term "outsider," I follow Peter Gay's use of the term, thereby also arguing that these individuals followed the pluralistic intellectual heritage of the Weimar Republic: Peter Gay, *Weimar Culture: The Outsider as Insider* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2001).
83. For a detailed discussion of this dynamic, see Nicolas Berg, *The Holocaust and The West German Historians: Historical Interpretation and Autobiographical Memory*, trans. Joel Golb, Illustrated edition (Madison, WI: The University of Wisconsin Press, 2014).
84. See <https://www.zdf.de/dokumentation/terra-x/wannsee-konferenz-unterrichtsmaterialien-schule-100.html>.

Biography

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