

**Volume 5**

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**The Wannsee Conference - I**

**Lead: On January 20, 1942, fourteen high-ranking Nazi officials gathered for a brief afternoon meeting in the Berlin suburb of Grossen-Wannsee. They met to organize the Holocaust.**

**Intro.: *A Moment in Time* with Dan Roberts.**

**Content: Adolf Hitler's leadership style was unique. He would give general orders to his associates and then set them against one another in a bizarre bureaucratic survival of the**

**fittest. Each of his henchmen would compete to demonstrate within his sphere of authority just how vigorous was his support for the Führer's vision. In no other endeavor was this more clearly demonstrated than in the final solution to *Judenfrage*, the "Jewish question."**

**Out of the fever swamp that was Hitler's mind had come the Nazi obsession with the Jews. Yet, in reality, he had tapped into a much more ancient and virulent emotion, that stream of anti-Semitism that animated not just Germans but most Europeans. He held the Jews responsible for every dysfunctional part of life: poverty, bolshevism,**

moral decay, Germany's economic stagnation. He had made his attack on the Jews such a vigorous piece of his program that when his party came to power it was natural that Jews should begin to suffer. Gradually, the Jews of Germany, then Austria, and, from September 1939, wherever German Armies went, Jews would be exterminated.

Special SS units *Einsatzgruppen* followed the armies and rounded up Jews, gypsies, homosexuals, and other undesirables, shot them or gassed them in portable transportable chambers, and buried them in mass graves. This, however, was slow, inefficient and soon resistance to this

**open slaughter of men, women, and children began to appear even in the most loyal of German Army units. It was gruesome business, therefore, another means of dealing with the Jews was needed. Next time: Der Henker, the hangman.**

**At the University of Richmond, this is Dan Roberts.**

## Resources

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