

Chapter 2

Psychoanalyzing Nazi Perpetrators on Television – *Reinhard Heydrich – Manager of Terror* (1977)

In 1977, ZDF aired *Reinhard Heydrich – Manager of Terror* [*Reinhard Heydrich – Manager des Terrors*],¹ a biopic directed by Heinz Schirk and written by Paul Mommertz. Dietrich Mattausch and Friedrich G. Beckhaus, who play Reinhard Heydrich and Heinrich Müller, would go on to reprise their roles in Schirk and Mommertz’s 1984 film *The Wannsee Conference*. Produced by Hans Günther Im-lau’s production company Sator Film and filmed in Studio Hamburg, *Manager of Terror* depicts Heydrich’s life through a series of vignettes that illustrate the different stages of his biography and aspects of his personality. These vignettes are intercut with narrated scenes psychoanalyzing Heydrich’s behavior. In contrast with their later film on the Wannsee Conference, *Manager of Terror* frequently utilizes archival footage and photographs. The film is split into three sections that depict the stages of Heydrich’s biography: The Origin (Der Ursprung), The Rise (Der Aufstieg) and The Conflict (Der Zwiespalt). *Manager of Terror* is an outlier in West German television history, but not because it is a film focusing on a Holocaust perpetrator. West German Holocaust dramas mostly focused on victims, rescue, and resistance. This television film is an outlier because it is explicitly an experiment in filmic psychohistory; a criminology professor comments on the films’ events and milestones in Heydrich’s biography throughout the film to create a “historical psychogram” of its protagonist. The film also represents an important stage on the path to Mommertz and Schirk’s later film about the Wannsee Conference. To this day, ZDF has not released *Manager of Terror* in either physical or digital formats.²

Several scenes also prefigure key parts of NBC’s *Holocaust*, as well as later depictions of Heydrich, such as *The Man with the Iron Heart* (2017). While only one brief scene portrays the Wannsee Conference, *Manager of Terror* is the earliest German-language depiction of the conference in dramatic film. Although not as groundbreaking or dramatically (and historically) convincing as *The Wannsee Conference*, *Manager of Terror* exemplifies West German television’s struggle

¹ For the sake of brevity, I will refer to the film as *Manager of Terror* in the rest of this chapter.

² The author is grateful to the Joseph Wulf Mediothek at the House of the Wannsee Conference Memorial and to Education Site for granting access to a copy of the film.

with depicting the Holocaust during the late 1970s. It is an example of a public television film going against the mainstream of West German historical television programming trends and, even more importantly, shows that, although such programming had not yet penetrated the West German consciousness, West German television networks had been engaging with the Holocaust even before the premiere of NBC's miniseries on ARD in January 1979.

Holocaust was a milestone in West German memory culture and made the term "Holocaust" part of the common lexicon. Nevertheless, *Holocaust* was not the first example of television programming in West Germany that explored Nazi crimes. West German public television stations had already been airing programming about the Nazi period before *Holocaust*'s 1978 premiere. During a thirty-year period (1954–1984), before the introduction of private television networks, West German public television channels and their executives held a monopoly and, in addition to news and entertainment, also "defined the population's educational needs, and, among many other items, this included the task of furthering Vergangenheitsbewältigung."³ Referencing the top-down nature of this programming, film and television historian Wulf Kansteiner defines this period as one of "patriarchal television" which included high-quality historical dramas which aired in primetime slots. This type of historical programming fell by the wayside by the late 1980s as a consequence of the rise of private television networks and decreased state funding.⁴ *Reinhard Heydrich – Manager of Terror* and *The Wannsee Conference* are part of this brief wave of "patriarchal television" which helped fulfill the networks' "educational mission" or *Bildungsauftrag*. Kansteiner notes an uptick in such programming on the public television network ZDF during the 1970s which predates *Holocaust*. Most of these programs focused on survivors and rescue.⁵ Kansteiner argues that "according to its television image in the Federal Republic, the Holocaust was a crime without perpetrators and bystanders."⁶ Perpetrator-focused productions like *The Wannsee Conference* or the Rudolf Höss biopic *Aus einem deutschen Leben* (1977) were outliers during this period. Kansteiner's argument is underscored by the muted reception perpetrator-focused productions like *Manager of Terror* and *The Wannsee Conference* received in West Germany. Later statements by Paul Mommertz about the lack of enthusiasm shown by ARD and Bayerischer Rundfunk for *The Wannsee Conference*, such as

3 Wulf Kansteiner, *In Pursuit of German Memory: History, Television, and Politics After Auschwitz* (Athens, Ohio: Ohio University Press, 2006), 110.

4 Kansteiner, *In Pursuit of German Memory*, 110–111.

5 Kansteiner, *In Pursuit of German Memory*, 115–116.

6 Kansteiner, *In Pursuit of German Memory*, 122.

the lackluster nature both of the promotional campaign and the educational supplements made available, further bolstered Kansteiner's claim.⁷

Kansteiner has noted that in contrast to ARD, which broadcasted *Holocaust*, ZDF took a more conservative tack and rarely depicted Nazi perpetrators outside of a "handful" of productions which "probed deeper into the gray, undefined collective of perpetrators who appeared on screen." He states that ZDF often relegated these productions to time slots that received low audience numbers. In his most damning critique of West German television's attitude towards the Holocaust, Kansteiner notes that "[t]he conscious or unconscious decision of television producers to spare the feelings of audience members and political supervisors highlights the political limits of Vergangenheitsbewältigung and raises the question of the extent to which the medium of television can function as a vehicle of social and cultural reform."⁸ Thus, explicitly antifascist perpetrator-focused productions like *Manager of Terror* and *The Wannsee Conference* went against the more conservative trends of West German television by explicitly depicting Nazi perpetrators as human beings, thereby confronting audiences with their own pasts – and their possible complicity. It is therefore little wonder that both films suffered ambivalent or negative reception upon their release. These types of films were outliers during a period of historical programming characterized by evading critical engagement with questions around the actions of perpetrators and the complicity of bystanders; an era focused on piety towards the victims and an absence of self-critical reflection.

The Munich-based screenwriter Paul Mommertz focused on the Nazi period for his entire career. A native of Aachen, trained historian, and former writer for *Simplicissimus*, Mommertz began writing plays during the 1960s, beginning with his 1963 play *Aktion T4*, which explores a family swept up in the Nazi program of euthanizing mentally ill and disabled persons. This play was an early example of stage productions that explored the Holocaust and has been overshadowed by more prominent works such as Rolf Hochhuth's *The Deputy* (1963) and Peter Weiss' *The Investigation* (1965). Mommertz claims that a postwar mental illness in his family, as well as the death of a mentally ill classmate during the war, inspired his interest in the topic of the euthanasia program.⁹ After the premiere of *Aktion T4*, he began writing historical dramas for television, including productions such as *Walther Rathenau – Anatomie eines Attentats* (1965), the Trotsky-themed *Das Attentat – Tod im Exil* (1967), and *Der Pedell* (1970), which depicted

⁷ Interview with Paul Mommertz, October 19, 2019, 30:13–32:33

⁸ Kansteiner, *In Pursuit of German Memory*, 125.

⁹ Interview with Paul Mommertz, November 16, 2018, 0:22–2:34.

Jakob Schmid and his denunciation of the Scholl siblings, leaders of the White Rose resistance cell. On his website, Mommertz mentions his lifelong engagement with the Second World War and the Holocaust: “My work was, of course, influenced by my experiences as a youth: by the, at the time, very strong environment of Catholicism in the Rhineland, the air war between 1942 and 1945, where I not only lost my father, but also classmates, and through National Socialism.”¹⁰ In an interview, Mommertz credits an Allied re-education newsreel with reshaping his worldview and influencing his career:

Then [at the end of the war], the cinemas were very quickly there again. Culture in general was there from the first day. Everything was destroyed, there was nothing except for culture. The libraries were there, the theaters were open and they now showed something completely different. Now came world theater and world literature and cinema. Instead of *Die Deutsche Wochenschau*, another [newsreel] ran. I went to the cinema to see some sort of tralala movie, some sort of comedy – and then I saw the new *Wochenschau* [newsreel]. And they took their time and showed images from the concentration camps, the famous thing. I saw it there for the first time. And I have to say that it blew me away, and that was my topic from there on out. I would like to say that I left the theater and wasn’t able to watch the main attraction. But I don’t think that was the case. Its scope must have become clear to me in the course of the day and week. Then of course you felt incredibly ashamed for your dear Fatherland [laughs].¹¹

Mommertz and the director Heinz Schirk belonged to a generation which historian Dirk Moses dubbed the “forty-fivers,” a play on the “sixty-eighter” term which refers to West German left-wing activists from the 1968 student movement. Forty-fivers are also sometimes dubbed the *Flakhelfer* or Hitler Youth generation.¹² According to Moses, the forty-fivers “were between fifteen and twenty-five years of age at the end of the war” and, in the 1960s, “commenced the task of subjecting the national intellectual traditions to a searching critique in light of their experience of the rupture of 1945.”¹³ Forty-fivers like Mommertz considered the German defeat and renewal of democracy “the turning point of their lives and the beginning of their own (and Germany’s) intellectual and emotional (*geistige*) reorientation.”¹⁴ For historian Michael Kater, forty-fivers in the West German cultural sphere like Martin Walser tended to produce docudramas for the stage

10 <http://www.paul-mommertz.de/lebenslauf.html>, Accessed August 20, 2020.

11 Interview with Paul Mommertz, October 19, 2019. 14:10–16:26.

12 A. Dirk Moses, *German Intellectuals and the Nazi Past*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 55.

13 Moses, *German Intellectuals*, 9.

14 Moses, *German Intellectuals*, 51.

which “reflected on the Nazis amid their crimes.”¹⁵ Kater also discusses postwar playwrights Hochhuth and Weiss, arguing that they tried to fill the silences created by West German historians, who they felt avoided discussing the Holocaust.¹⁶ With his television docudramas, Paul Mommertz would also try to close that gap and follow in the footsteps of Weiss and Hochhuth.

1 Historical Advisor Shlomo Aronson

Little production material for *Manager of Terror* has survived. Unlike his practices for his later film *The Wannsee Conference*, Paul Mommertz only saved three letters from the Israeli historian Shlomo Aronson regarding *Manager of Terror*. Other material, such as the script, production correspondence, memos, drafts, and bibliographies are absent from his archive. Mommertz used Aronson’s study *Reinhard Heydrich und die Frühgeschichte von Gestapo und SD* as one of his key sources for the film. One early scene, in which Heydrich’s parents express shock at their young son having climbed onto his school’s roof in order to prove his fearlessness, is taken almost verbatim from a passage in Aronson’s book.¹⁷ However, Aronson’s study of Heydrich, the SD, and Gestapo stops in 1935, so Mommertz could not have solely relied on his work. Mommertz corresponded with Aronson during preproduction of *Manager of Terror* and throughout the preproduction of *The Wannsee Conference*. Aronson is an uncredited historical advisor for *Manager of Terror* and the available correspondence confirms this status. The first Aronson letter, dated August 7, 1975, answers questions Mommertz had posed in a previous letter dated July 23, 1975. Mommertz’s original letter remains undiscovered.¹⁸ In this letter, Aronson wishes Mommertz luck in undertaking the

15 Michael H. Kater, *After the Nazis: The Story of Culture in West Germany* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2023), 176.

16 Kater, *After the Nazis*, 180–181. See also his discussion of Alexander Kluge, 186–187.

17 Shlomo Aronson, *Reinhard Heydrich und die Frühgeschichte von Gestapo und SD* (Stuttgart: Deutsche Verlags-Anstalt, 1971), 22–23.

18 Shlomo Aronson’s papers are currently housed at the Massuah Institute for Holocaust Studies in Tel Yitzhak, Israel, but are not yet available to researchers. The primary sources contained in the Paul Mommertz collection at the Joseph Wulf Mediothek are a mixture of original documents and photocopies; they are often unlabeled, so it is unclear what is an original and what is a photocopy. This is especially apparent with the correspondence contained within the collection. Due to the unavailability of Aronson’s papers, we often are presented with only one half of the correspondence and cannot be sure if some of Mommertz’s drafts were actually sent to Aronson. This becomes particularly important during my later discussion of *The Wannsee Conference*’s West German reception.

“very difficult project” of portraying Heydrich on film and recommends that Mommertz contact two historians: George Browder and Wolfgang Scheffler, both of whom specialized in Holocaust history, with Browder specifically specializing in the history of the SD and German police.¹⁹ There is no evidence that Mommertz contacted these historians, though Scheffler appears in the bibliography for his later film *The Wannsee Conference*.²⁰ Aronson also mentions the possibility of Mommertz visiting him in Jerusalem in order to access and photocopy primary sources housed at the Hebrew University, as well as a possible meeting between the two in West Berlin later that September.²¹ No record exists confirming when Mommertz traveled to Israel for research, but in an interview, he mentioned meeting Aronson in Israel and sending him drafts of his *Wannsee Conference* screenplay, which is confirmed by other letters contained in the Paul Mommertz collection.²²

The second letter from Aronson, dated March 24, 1976, is largely concerned with whether Heydrich suffered from long-term physical and mental problems due to a childhood case of encephalitis. Mommertz had written Aronson about this possibility on March 7, 1976, and, while Aronson was skeptical, he promised to contact the health authorities in Halle as well as potential family doctors or their archives in order to see if they possessed any of Heydrich’s medical records.²³ Aronson expressed understanding for Mommertz’s decision to consult the criminologist Armand Mergen in order to make “assessments of [Heydrich’s] temperament” and said that he had interest in a “medical investigation” of Heydrich, but that he was very cautious about making statements about Heydrich’s mental state in his book.²⁴

The final Aronson letter, dated May 24, 1976, is unusual because it is the only English-language correspondence found in Mommertz’s archive. This letter is a response to a screenplay draft sent on May 11, 1976 and consists of three major points. Aronson’s first comment is that the screenplay’s dialogue is too “modern”

19 Letter from Shlomo Aronson to Paul Mommertz, August 7, 1975, in Ordner 0, “Korrespondenz Paul Mommertz mit Shlomo Aronson,” Bestand Paul Mommertz, Joseph Wulf Mediothek, Gedenk- und Bildungsstätte Haus der Wannsee-Konferenz, Berlin, 1–2.

20 Paul Mommertz, “Literatur Drehbuch “Wannseekonferenz” in Ordner 2, Kapitel 1000 “Quellen (IMT, Literatur),” Bestand Paul Mommertz, Joseph Wulf Mediothek, Gedenk- und Bildungsstätte Haus der Wannsee-Konferenz, Berlin, 1983, 2.

21 Letter from Shlomo Aronson to Paul Mommertz, August 7, 1975, 2.

22 Interview with Paul Mommertz, November 16, 2018, 43:58–45:23.

23 Letter from Shlomo Aronson to Paul Mommertz, March 24, 1976, in Ordner 0, “Korrespondenz Paul Mommertz mit Shlomo Aronson,” Bestand Paul Mommertz, Joseph Wulf Mediothek, Gedenk- und Bildungsstätte Haus der Wannsee-Konferenz, Berlin, 1.

24 Aronson to Paul Mommertz, March 24, 1976, 1.

and “far from the traditional atmosphere both at Heydrichs’ [sic] home and especially in the navy.”²⁵ Because no script drafts are available, it is impossible to determine how much dialogue, if any, was changed in the final script. He also notes that the scene depicting Heydrich’s court-martial would have been judged by a “Full Court of Honor” instead of a single judge – this is the case in the final film, so Mommertz did, it seems, change this scene. Most notably, Aronson warns Mommertz about potential legal trouble if he kept the scene as in the script:

The chairman [of the court of honor] was probably Vice-Admiral Hansen, commander of the marine station North Sea who curiously enough may still be alive. Some other members of the court may also have survived. As I know these people very well, it is very easy to get involved with an angry reaction from them, which might end with judicial proceedings.²⁶

In his second point, Aronson continues this line of argument, but this time regarding Heydrich’s widow Lina: “. . . [T]he role you have created for her in the manuscript and many dialogues invented in this connection may also bring about a very tough reaction unless you first spoke to her.”²⁷ He also suggests that Mommertz consult Werner Best, Heydrich’s former SD deputy. No evidence suggests that Mommertz contacted the above-mentioned people. Mommertz has also denied contacting Lina Heydrich.²⁸ Aronson’s third and final comment is his most salient: “Many other dialogues . . . do not fit in with the historical style and seem to be overly simplistic. The atmosphere lacks the intense ideological bias on Himmler’s part, Heydrich’s seemingly clever brutality and the heavily traditional bureaucratic background.”²⁹ Compared with *The Wannsee Conference*, the dialogue in *Manager of Terror* seems less convincing. Aronson’s point about Himmler’s missing “intense ideological bias” is a key flaw of *Manager of Terror*; several scenes imply that Himmler had qualms about killing his opponents and that he let Heydrich bully him (his superior!) into submission. As far as the “traditional bureaucratic background,” the film’s reliance on inserts of psychological commentary handicaps the rest of the film, giving it a rushed, disjointed feel once Heydrich enters the SS – which was intentional. A promotional blurb in the *Süd-deutsche Zeitung* from July 22, 1977 describes the film as a “psychogram in scenes”

25 Letter from Shlomo Aronson to Paul Mommertz, May 24, 1976, in Ordner 0, “Korrespondenz Paul Mommertz mit Shlomo Aronson,” Bestand Paul Mommertz, Joseph Wulf Mediothek, Gedenk- und Bildungsstätte Haus der Wannsee-Konferenz, Berlin, 1.

26 Letter from Shlomo Aronson to Paul Mommertz, May 24, 1976, 1.

27 Letter from Shlomo Aronson to Paul Mommertz, May 24, 1976, 1.

28 Paul Mommertz, Email to Author, August 19, 2020.

29 Letter from Shlomo Aronson to Paul Mommertz, May 24, 1976, 2.

and quotes Mommertz saying that the film eschews a “continuous chronology.”³⁰ Curiously, the blurb claims that Heydrich would have been an unknown had it not been for his assassination. It describes the film as “supported by short inserts of commentary that intercut the scenes.”³¹ It also highlights that the first third of the film (The “Origin”) depicts the young Heydrich suffering from the fear of possible Jewish ancestry.

2 *Manager of Terror*

Reinhard Heydrich – Manager of Terror opens with a shot of Lina Heydrich in mourning attire walking through a hallway flanked by SS guards. Some of them lead her into a room, where she watches footage of Heydrich’s state funeral after his assassination in Prague at the hands of Czechoslovak Special Operations Executive (SOE) agents Jan Kubiš and Jozef Gabčík.³² This footage is from *Die deutsche Wochenschau* nr. 615, which aired on June 18, 1942.³³ The film shows the section of the newsreel depicting Heydrich’s funeral in full and does not interrupt the narrator’s (Harry Giese) shrill commentary. Heydrich’s funeral was “one of the most elaborate funeral ceremonies ever staged in the Third Reich” and was a key propaganda event. Hitler and Himmler eulogized him as a martyr and as an embodiment of the SS ideal.³⁴ The film then transitions to a shot of Heydrich’s death mask as a voiceover narration asks the audience: “Reinhard Heydrich. One of the most monstrous figures of the Hitler Regime, but little-known. Who was this man? Questions for historians. Questions for psychologists.” The narration intercuts the entire film and is its most unique feature when compared to other Holocaust films or historical films in general. It clearly has its roots in the subfield of psychohistory, which Wulf Kansteiner has identified as a key influence on 1970s ZDF programming about Nazi Germany and the Holocaust.³⁵ This narration, writ-

30 “Reinhard Hedyrich – Manager des Terrors,” *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, Nr. 166, July 22, 1977, 30.

31 “Reinhard Hedyrich – Manager des Terrors,” 30.

32 Heydrich and his assassination have constantly been present in films, beginning with Fritz Lang and Bertolt Brecht’s *Hangmen Also Die!* (1943). Early drafts of the *Conspiracy/Complicity* double feature included Heydrich’s assassination as the turning point in the drama and recent films like *Anthropoid* (2016) and *The Man with the Iron Heart* (2017) center on Kubiš and Gabčík’s role in the assassination and its aftermath. The latter film is another example of a Heydrich biopic and will be discussed in this study’s final chapter.

33 See <https://archive.org/details/1942-06-18-Die-Deutsche-Wochenschau-615>

34 Gerwarth, *Hitler’s Hangman*, 278–279.

35 Wulf Kansteiner, “Visual *Wunderjahre*: German Television and the Disappearance of the Nazi Perpetrators” (Perpetrator Research in a Global Context / Täterforschung im globalen Kontext,

ten by University of Mainz professor Armand Mergen, focuses on Heydrich's inner life and motivations.³⁶ In an interview for this study, Heinz Schirk claimed that he narrated these passages himself.³⁷ Paul Mommertz states that the motivation for this technique stemmed from the complicated nature of Heydrich's personality: "Then I had the idea . . . I realized that this Heydrich is a complicated, most likely pathological character, and I would have to actually be able to speak with someone like a psychologist, psychotherapist, or depth psychologist."³⁸ This filmic experiment, which combines docudrama with academic commentary, is not present in Schirk and Mommertz's later collaboration on *The Wannsee Conference*. Heinz Schirk has stated that he wishes he had dispensed with the narration altogether.³⁹ While it certainly adds to the film's didactic aspirations, it veers the film into problematic territory. Its focus on Heydrich's "abnormal" personality characteristics dangerously perpetuates earlier historiographical and popular cultural trends, which depicted Holocaust perpetrators and the Nazi elite as "pathologically disturbed."⁴⁰ Heydrich's psychological background as a central theme – and the psychological makeup of Nazi leadership in general – were still common in historical and popular writing during the 1960s and 70s.⁴¹ One scholar of comparative fascism has noted that "[t]he use of psychoanalytic theories to explain 'aberrational' politics has been immensely tempting for scholars of European fascism as well as the American fringe, even among those who would otherwise abjure and even sneer at psycho-history as a branch of historical analysis."⁴² Ian Kershaw has noted that early biographies of Hitler and the 1970s psychohistorical trend represented the "apogée of 'Hitler-centrism,'" i.e. intentionalism, and that studies focusing on Hitler's personality fail to explain "how such a person could become ruler of Germany and how his ideological paranoia came to be implemented as government policy by non-paranoids and non-psychopaths in a sophis-

Berlin, 2009), https://www.bpb.de/system/files/dokument_pdf/9Z56AT%5B1%5D_kansteiner.pdf, Footnote 1.

³⁶ Interview with Paul Mommertz, March 14, 2019, 2:42–7:41.

³⁷ Interview with Heinz Schirk, April 5, 2019, 9:01–9:41.

³⁸ Interview with Paul Mommertz, March 14, 2019, 2:42–7:41.

³⁹ Interview with Heinz Schirk, April 5, 2019, 9:01–9:41.

⁴⁰ Gerwarth, *Hitler's Hangman*, xvi.

⁴¹ See Joachim E. Fest, *The Face of The Third Reich: Portraits of The Nazi Leadership* (New York: Da Capo Press, 1999), originally published in 1973, for one example.

⁴² Richard Steigmann-Gall, "Star-Spangled Fascism: American Interwar Political Extremism in Comparative Perspective," *Social History* 42, no. 1 (January 2, 2017): 94–119, 110.

ticated, modern bureaucratic system.”⁴³ Such an argument can also be applied to the portrayal of Heydrich in *Manager of Terror*. Although biographical films by their very nature will inevitably focus on the personalities of their protagonists, the “psychogram” of Heydrich in *Manager of Terror* goes too far into explaining his rise as the man responsible for the Holocaust as the result of a disturbed personality.⁴⁴ One of the other ethical problems with this approach is that it can lead to the impression that Germany was simply under the yoke of madmen and the German people were either coerced or hoodwinked into supporting them. *Manager of Terror* does not go too far in its portrayal of Heydrich as psychologically disturbed; however, such an approach always still risks propagating old, comforting myths about Nazis as abnormal people. This does not preclude the possibility that some Nazi leaders were indeed sociopathic or mentally ill, but to reduce Heydrich’s motivation to mental illness pathologizes fascist tendencies and ignores ideology. As Richard J. Evans has put it, “[i]deological and historical context in the end was more important than individual psychology.”⁴⁵

The film then proceeds as a flashback, by beginning with Heydrich’s childhood in Halle an der Saale. This initial scene depicts Heydrich suffering anti-Semitic bullying from classmates at his father’s conservatory. The film correctly depicts Heydrich’s struggle with rumors of his potential Jewish ancestry throughout his life. For example, during his childhood, his classmates often called him names like “Isidor.”⁴⁶ Heydrich’s parents discuss the young Reinhard as a troubled and reckless youth; Armand Merger’s commentary seeks a medical explanation for this behavior and Heydrich’s subsequent development by claiming that a childhood case of encephalitis could have contributed to strong personality changes such as aggression and recklessness. This is a key example of psychohistory of the type discussed above; also note that recent academic literature such as Robert Gerwarth’s biography do not mention such a childhood illness, yet the press and popular histories often still repeat this rumor. For example, Mario Dederichs’ *Heydrich: The Face of Evil* mentions a case of encephalitis in Heydrich’s infancy and implies that it could have caused his later development into a mass murderer.⁴⁷ Recall that in his letter from March 24, 1976, Shlomo Aronson states

43 Ian Kershaw, *The Nazi Dictatorship: Problems and Perspectives of Interpretation* (London, New York: Bloomsbury, 2015), 89.

44 For more on psychological explanations for the Nazis as an outgrowth of the immediate post-war era, see Evans, *Hitler’s People*, 105–108.

45 Evans, *Hitler’s People*, 236.

46 Gerwarth, *Hitler’s Hangman*, 26.

47 Mario R. Dederichs, *Heydrich: The Face of Evil* (Annapolis, Newbury: Casemate, 2009), 23.

that he exercised caution about including speculation about possible illnesses in his book on Heydrich and that only a medical specialist could truly diagnose him. He also notes that the German Navy, which would have been able to be highly selective about its officer candidates during the Great Depression, would have likely prevented Heydrich from joining if such an illness had been present. He would not pass a physical examination if he had truly suffered from long-term effects of a childhood encephalitis or meningitis case.⁴⁸ The rest of the film is punctuated by Mergen's psychohistorical audio commentary, which always appears alongside historical photos of Heydrich in order to underscore the film's authenticity. Other psychohistorical inserts describe Heydrich as an "insecure" individual full of "neurotic self-love" who "fled into self-pity." Heydrich's "ambition," "need for battle," and "cold fanaticism" are "all symptoms of a paranoid-disturbed personality."⁴⁹ A key insert claims: "Heydrich, as a schizoid personality, sees people as material that one can use without hesitation or throw away. His robotlike organizational genius makes him an ideal manager of power." Other interludes explicitly denounce Heydrich as a sadist: "The linked gratification of his power and sex drives manifests itself in the perverted lust of the sadist." A final insert describes him as a "neurotic and psychopath" with an "abnormal personality." This section argues that the Nazi regime permitted such people to satisfy their urges in "great style." These inserts are not problematic because they depict abnormalities or negative features of Heydrich's personality, but rather because they ascribe sole explanatory power to them at the expense of ideology, social background, and internal power dynamics within the SS and SD. Although personality traits and psychological questions may be more interesting to television viewers than the above-mentioned factors, they open up films to charges of sensationalism and demonization. *Manager of Terror* suffers in this aspect because it makes explicit what other films keep implicit – it is one thing if a character *seems* disturbed, but quite another when the narrator *diagnoses* him as such.

In a key scene towards the end of the film, Heydrich fails to impress a barmaid with his high rank and societal status. The other bar patrons laugh at his self-importance and mock him. In response, Heydrich shouts at them and says he could have them all thrown in a concentration camp if he wanted to. He smashes a vase and leaves the bar. Upon returning home, he is surprised by his own reflection in a mirror, draws his pistol, and shoots at his own reflection. An insert

⁴⁸ Letter from Shlomo Aronson to Paul Mommertz, March 24, 1976, 1.

⁴⁹ All subsequent quotes from the psychohistorical inserts are transcriptions from *Manager of Terror*, no screenplay could be located.

immediately before this sequence states that Heydrich is “unloved, rejected, and lonely . . . he is an uncanny stranger to himself.”

Immediately after this incident, he calls himself “crazy” and tells his wife Lina that he thought a stranger had been waiting for him in the doorway. He then tells her that he has been named *Reichsprotector* of Bohemia and Moravia and that they must prepare for their move to Prague; that this promotion will bring them a lot of money and that his Weimar-era debts will no longer pose a problem. The film ends with a brief mention of his assassination. These psycho-historical inserts are the most problematic aspect of *Manager of Terror*. They break up the flow of the film (in contrast with *The Wannsee Conference*, which, by nature of its subject matter, is much more self-contained and restrained). These voiceover inserts discount Heydrich’s (and by extension, other Holocaust perpetrators’) own abilities, intellect, and ideological convictions, instead pushing Nazism into the realm of pathology. Paul Mommertz later distanced himself from these inserts and their implications (which remain absent from his later work):

The diagnosis, that the psychologist . . . the professor offers, has the strong tendency to characterize [Heydrich] as if he couldn’t do anything differently, that he was a pathological person. That always had a connotation of excusing him: “that’s a poor dog that couldn’t do anything differently,” to put it bluntly. And viewers possibly saw it that way. It was very dangerous. I would do it today [differently] . . . I didn’t have these reservations when I wrote [the screenplay], but afterwards I thought that there was a certain danger that the film exonerates Heydrich or can be understood that way.⁵⁰

When *Manager of Terror* avoids psychohistory, it does better, largely due to the strength of Mommertz’s writing and Dietrich Mattausch’s performance. The film quickly progresses through Heydrich’s life and depicts his dismissal from the Navy and engagement to Lina von Osten. In the scene where Heydrich first meets Lina (Isabell Stumpf), the band they are dancing to plays the Weimar-era jazz standard “Schöner Gigolo, armer Gigolo,” underscoring Heydrich’s reputation for womanizing and infidelity. Later in the scene, he shows her a photograph of his fiancée, which he subsequently sets on fire in order to signify that he is breaking off the engagement (the ensuing scandal and his flippant attitude later resulted in his dismissal from the Navy). Lina introduces him to the Nazi Party, which he is initially skeptical of, dismissing the “proletarian” SA and their “crap-brown uniforms.” Lina, a well-connected party member, arranges a job interview with Himmler (Franz Rudnick). During the interview, a sniffing Himmler (recovering from a cold) praises Heydrich for his “Nordic” appearance and asks him to draft an organizational scheme for an intelligence agency – what would become the

⁵⁰ Interview with Paul Mommertz, March 14, 2019, 19:53–21:51.

Sicherheitsdienst (SD). Heydrich says that the traditional spies are too expensive for the cash-strapped party and also incompatible with the tenets of National Socialism. He advocates a new, internal intelligence service staffed with committed Nazis and then proceeds to draw an organizational chart of the SD. In the next scene, Heydrich makes it clear to Lina that he was bluffing – he had no real intelligence experience and based his suggestions off of detective novels and his rudimentary knowledge of foreign intelligence agencies. This scene corresponds with Aronson's recounting of Heydrich's interview with Himmler.⁵¹

The interview, which took place on June 14, 1931, marked the beginning of Heydrich's close working relationship with Himmler, which Robert Gerwarth describes as mutually beneficial and close: "For the rest of Heydrich's life, Himmler was his central ideological and professional reference point . . . Himmler could rely on his unshakeable loyalty." For Gerwarth, Heydrich acted as Himmler's "deputy" and "transformed the Nazi worldview as expressed by Hitler and Himmler into concrete policies."⁵² This aspect of their working relationship illustrates Heydrich's importance to Nazi anti-Jewish measures and later campaigns of terror and mass murder on the road to Wannsee. It is here that the film's title becomes clear: Heydrich is depicted as the *manager* of policies stemming from Hitler and Himmler; the figure who translated ideology into praxis. One problematic aspect of the film centers around the relationship between Heydrich and Himmler. The film depicts Heydrich as more radical than Himmler and more willing to resort to extreme violence. For example, Himmler expresses shock during a scene where Heydrich suggests that they arrest and execute leading members of the SA and right-wing opposition such as Ernst Röhm in what would become known as the Night of the Long Knives. The scene suggests that in June 1934, Himmler had scruples about resorting to violence and that Heydrich had to convince him of its necessity. Such a characterization has no historical basis and is absent from Aronson's work.⁵³ This is not to say that Heydrich did not advocate extreme violence and radical action, but rather that when he did so, there is no evidence to suggest that his superior Himmler expressed reservations about approving it. In a subsequent, particularly powerful sequence, (the film notes that Ernst Röhm was the godfather of one of Heydrich's children), Heydrich slowly crosses out the type-written names of the purge victims as he makes his way down his list of them, underscoring how executions of political rivals take place in a modern, bureaucratic state.

⁵¹ Aronson, *Reinhard Heydrich*, 37–38.

⁵² Gerwarth, *Hitler's Hangman*, 52.

⁵³ Aronson, *Reinhard Heydrich*, 191–195.

A later scene which takes place in early 1942 (after the Wannsee Conference and before Heydrich's death) is even more problematic. Heydrich and Himmler discuss exterminating the Jews of Europe – and Himmler expresses reservations. Here, the scene seems to imply that Heydrich was acting independently of Himmler and that a rivalry grew between the two of them, possibly in order to gain favor with Hitler. Gerwarth points out that Heydrich and Himmler always maintained a close working relationship and friendship and that there is no “hard evidence” of animosity or rivalry between them; rumors stem from unreliable post-war memoirs of SD men and Himmler's physical therapist Felix Kersten.⁵⁴ In a later passage, Gerwarth again emphasizes this lack of evidence: “there is no evidence that Heydrich's loyalty towards his mentor was ever in question.”⁵⁵ In his biography of Himmler, historian Peter Longerich identifies “two competing chains of command involving Jewish policy: Hitler–Himmler–Heydrich and Hitler–Göring–Heydrich” and notes that Himmler “was thereby in danger of being excluded from the decision-making process in the event of his proving insufficiently active on the anti-Semitic front.”⁵⁶ Nevertheless, Longerich points out that these two different policy axes “do not, however, appear to have led to serious rivalry between Himmler and Heydrich. On the contrary, Himmler considered that in the first instance and above all it was his own power that had been adversely affected by his colleague's murder.”⁵⁷ Thus, *Manager of Terror* invents either a rivalry between the two or at the very least a relationship dynamic in which a weak Himmler lets his subordinate and closest protégé berate him into signing off on genocide.

The film depicts Heydrich's attitudes towards his subordinates differently, where Heydrich is alternately charming and abusive towards his subordinates. In one scene, he threatens Heinrich Müller of the Bavarian Political Police (and later head of the Gestapo) with being sent to Dachau if he fails to meet his expectations. These scenes are underscored by Armand Mergen's commentary about Heydrich's psychological profile – for instance, the comment describing Heydrich's attitude towards people as “material that one can unhesitatingly use or throw away.” In one key scene depicting the creation of the *Einsatzgruppen* as the Wehrmacht prepares to invade the Soviet Union in June 1941, Heydrich discusses the need to eliminate political commissars and Jews as the Wehrmacht advances. During this briefing, Heydrich berates his SD subordinates, including Eichmann (whom he calls an “asshole”), and then assigns the commands of the four *Einsatz-*

⁵⁴ Gerwarth, *Hitler's Hangman*, 95.

⁵⁵ Gerwarth, *Hitler's Hangman*, 225.

⁵⁶ Peter Longerich, *Heinrich Himmler: A Life*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 217.

⁵⁷ Longerich, *Heinrich Himmler*, 570.

gruppen to individual officers whom he berates one by one. In one instance, Heydrich shouts at the career policeman Arthur Nebe for being hesitant to shoot innocent civilians before assigning him command of *Einsatzgruppe* B. Heydrich's threatening attitude towards his subordinates corresponds with historical accounts which describe his leadership style as "despotic"⁵⁸ and "creating a permanently 'tense atmosphere full of mistrust and friction.'"⁵⁹

The immediately following scene depicts Heydrich and his subordinates watching amateur footage of a mass shooting on a projector. The footage in question is an actual amateur film of a mass shooting in Liepāja, Latvia taken by a German sailor.⁶⁰ Heydrich says that the mass shooting seen in the footage is a "disgrace" (*Sauerei*) and that the SS needs to find a "decent" method. He mentions the T4 euthanasia program as a possible alternative. This segment is very similar to a scene in NBC's *Holocaust*, which would have been in the midst of production when *Manager of Terror* aired on television. In that scene, Heydrich and Erik Dorf watch the same archival footage of the Liepāja massacre and complain about the inefficiency of the *Einsatzgruppen* and shooting as a killing method. No sources exist proving that *Holocaust*'s production team watched *Manager of Terror*, but the scene in *Holocaust* seems to be a direct reference to this one.

The scene depicting the Wannsee Conference is the earliest known German-language depiction of Wannsee on film. Only lasting around one minute, the scene clearly echoes the above-mentioned *Einsatzgruppen* briefing scene, underscoring the Germans' increasing radicalization as the war progressed. The other attendees (besides Eichmann and Müller) remain nameless. The scene roughly follows the protocol: Heydrich opens by discussing his July 1941 letter from Göring, which tasked him with preparing an "overall solution of the Jewish Question in the German sphere of influence in Europe."⁶¹ He continues by mentioning the resettlement of Jews from the Reich and occupied territories, the concentration of them in ghettos, and forced labor divided by sex and subsequent "natural attrition." He then notes that any survivors will be subject to "special treatment" (*Sonderbehandlung*), a euphemism for execution.⁶² Heydrich calls for coordination be-

⁵⁸ Walter Wanek, quoted in Gerwarth, *Hitler's Hangman*, 95.

⁵⁹ Werner Best, quoted in Gerwarth, *Hitler's Hangman*, 95. See Gerwarth's discussion in endnote 89, which lists other accounts of Heydrich's frightening leadership style.

⁶⁰ This footage can be found in the digital collections of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum; see <https://encyclopedia.ushmm.org/content/en/film/einsatzgruppen-mobile-killing-units> and <https://collections.ushmm.org/search/catalog/irn1005052>.

⁶¹ Quoted in Roseman, *The Wannsee Conference and the Final Solution: A Reconsideration*, 40.

⁶² Cornelia Schmitz-Berning, *Vokabular des Nationalsozialismus* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2010), 584–587.

tween the different governmental agencies and the SS, saying that organizational problems have obstructed policy up until now. During his presentation, massive portraits of Hitler and Himmler loom behind Heydrich (see Figure 2.2), underscoring the film's intentionalist interpretation of the Holocaust. Other scenes include Heydrich telling people to read *Mein Kampf* if they want to understand the direction Nazi policy is taking. The scene ends with Heydrich closing the meeting and sending the participants to a buffet. He then has a brief chat with Müller, says that the attendees are not shocked, but instead “ideal underlings [*Befehlsempfänger*].” He expresses satisfaction with the meeting and says that he will go enjoy a “decent cognac.”

Prefiguring later, more detailed depictions of the conference, *Manager of Terror* sticks to a “you are there” cinematographic approach: the camera largely remains at eye-level, at the table (Figure 2.1) and, in contrast with *Holocaust*, the set decoration is more restrained, with the exception of the Hitler portrait in Figure 2.2.



Figure 2.1: The Wannsee Conference in *Reinhard Heydrich: Manager of Terror*.
Reinhard Heydrich – Manager des Terrors. Infafilm, Zweites deutsches Fernsehen (ZDF), 1977.

Although the Wannsee Conference only appears in one scene, it complements the larger portrait of Heydrich in *Manager of Terror*. The film is concerned with Heydrich's personality and obsession with power and control. This scene is about Heydrich using his alternately charming and abusive personality in order to accomplish his policy goals without resistance. The film ends shortly after the section when Heydrich shoots at his own reflection, noting that Heydrich was the “victim” of an assassination in Prague. Paul Mommertz has since distanced him-



Figure 2.2: Hitler looms in the background as Heinrich Müller (Friedrich G. Beckhaus) and Heydrich discuss the results of the Wannsee Conference. *Reinhard Heydrich – Manager des Terrors*. Infafilm, Zweites deutsches Fernsehen (ZDF), 1977.

self from this language, noting that several critics had issues with it: “I can only remember a critique that I have to agree with: at the end of the film, there is a line [stating that] ‘Heydrich became victim of an assassination.’ And many reviews were bothered by the word ‘victim’ and asked [. . .] whether there wasn’t too much understanding for him or too much was excused.”⁶³

3 Reception

Reinhard Heydrich: Manager of Terror aired on ZDF on Friday, July 22, 1977 at 8:15 pm and received muted reception in West Germany and little international reception, in stark contrast with *The Wannsee Conference*, which was well-received outside of West Germany. The writer and editor Walter Jens (under his pseudonym “Momos”) penned a negative review for *Die Zeit* entitled “The Great Demon Reinhard H.”⁶⁴ Jens takes the film to task for not depicting Heydrich’s victims and instead focusing on Heydrich as a fascinating villain. He claims that the film reproduces Nazi propaganda and its image of Heydrich while also transforming him into a “demon.” For him, Dietrich Mattausch’s Heydrich is Paul Mommertz’s

⁶³ Interview with Paul Mommertz, March 14, 2019, 19:53–21:51.

⁶⁴ Jens, “Der große Dämon Reinhard H.”

“fallen angel.” The last paragraph argues that the film diverts attention from the victims and focuses on the “Nazi Superman” Heydrich:

The millions remain silent so that he can savor his role: No gassed child, no skeleton, no ramp [at Auschwitz], not even the park bench which Jews were not allowed to sit on at that time in Germany came into the picture. The state of mind of the victims (perhaps one of them also had a funny father and a dutybound mother: someone among the countless whose death date, in contrast to Heydrich's hour of death, we will never know?), the state of mind of the victims, the nameless with their dreadful everyman's end, is not mentioned.⁶⁵

The historian Andreas Eichmüller agrees with Jens by arguing that *Manager of Terror* depicts Heydrich as an “evil genius,” but nevertheless points out that the film largely corresponds to biographical depictions of Heydrich at the time, such as the 1977 biography by Günther Deschner.⁶⁶ Jens' argument falls into the trap identified by Wulf Kansteiner: because German television at the time rarely depicted Nazis and Holocaust perpetrators in detail, *Manager of Terror* is one of a handful of productions. This is why Kansteiner characterizes ZDF historical programming in this era as depicting a “Genocide without Perpetrators.”⁶⁷ So Jens, citing the suffering of Holocaust victims in his review, contributes to a line of West German thinking that advocated ignoring the perpetrators, many of whom were still living and occupying prominent societal positions. In this mindset, attention devoted to Nazi perpetrators is tasteless. This line of argument is similar to the prohibition on images and representation (*Darstellungsverbot*, *Bilderverbot*) is discussed by Catrin Corell, only here the problem is that Jens seems to be advocating a *Darstellungsverbot* applied to the perpetrators in general, not a blanket prohibition of depicting atrocities on screen.⁶⁸ This type of thinking still persists in contexts ranging from German conservative circles, which advocate moving on from the Nazi past, to those with more well-meaning but still misguided misgivings. One example of the latter is the philosopher Susan Neiman's fear of perpetrator-focused historical sites like the House of the Wannsee Conference or

⁶⁵ Jens, “Der große Dämon Reinhard H.”

⁶⁶ Andreas Eichmüller, “‘Auf das Typische kommt es an.’ Bilder und Narrative der SS in Film und Fernsehen in den 1970er-Jahren,” in *Die SS nach 1945: Entschuldungsnarrative, populäre Mythen, europäische Erinnerungsdiskurse*, ed. Jan Erik Schulte and Michael Wildt (Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2018), 301. For Deschner, see Günther Deschner, *Reinhard Heydrich: Statthalter der totalen Macht*, (Esslingen am Neckar: Bechtle, 1977).

⁶⁷ Wulf Kansteiner, “Ein Völkermord ohne Täter: Die Darstellung der ‘Endlösung’ in den Sendungen des Zweiten Deutschen Fernsehens,” in *Medien-Politik-Geschichte. Tel Aviver Jahrbuch fuer Deutsche Geschichte* 31, ed. Moshe Zuckermann, (Göttingen: Wallstein Verlag, 2003), 229–262.

⁶⁸ Corell, *Der Holocaust als Herausforderung für den Film*, 15.

Topography of Terror distracting the public from Holocaust victims and becoming either unintentional shrines to the SS or the focus of morbid “dark tourism.”⁶⁹ Nevertheless, there is something to this critique. In a 2018 interview with the *Prager Zeitung*, Dietrich Mattausch described praise he received from Nazis for his role as Heydrich: “I got invitations to very specific ‘meetings.’ With the note that if [Mattausch] can play Heydrich so well, he can only be ‘one of us.’”⁷⁰ In an interview for this study, Heinz Schirk claimed that films have limited didactic potential and can only reach those already susceptible to their messages:⁷¹ so, for example, a film like *Manager of Terror* cannot convert a neo-Nazi, so it is little wonder that some of them would mistakenly view productions like it as praising their ideological heroes. Such charges are reminiscent of those some critics, such as Christopher Grau, have leveled at the film *American History X* (1998), a drama depicting an American neo-Nazi’s radicalization and eventual rejection of his ideology.⁷² Grau posits that by depicting Nazis on film, the nature of film as a medium inherently makes Nazis attractive to viewers and it is therefore little wonder that actual Nazis find the films appealing.

In a negative review for the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, Ernst-Otto Maetzke found the film’s psychological focus unconvincing and noted that the film failed to live up to its title. He correctly points out that the film’s portrayal of Himmler is so problematic that he could earn a “*Persilschein*,” a sarcastic postwar German term referring to a past ostensibly free of involvement with the Nazi regime. In his most original point, Maetzke argues that the film fails to depict Heydrich’s reign of terror in Czechoslovakia – the film briefly depicts it in only one scene. He also noted that the film’s “pathetic” epigraph, which calls Heydrich a “victim of an assassination in Prague” was not a good plot point and that the film wastes its time with “unimportant” scenes. Finally, Maetzke speculated that Momertz relied on Lina Heydrich’s memoirs as a source, which led to “unimportant” scenes in dance halls.⁷³ Maetzke’s critique, particularly that of the portrayal of

69 For the former opinion in a recent mainstream conservative publication, see Torsten Krauel, “Nazis nach 1945: Der SS-Lehrer, der keiner war,” *Die Welt*, August 14, 2020, <https://www.welt.de/debatte/kommentare/article213603326/Nazis-nach-1945-Der-SS-Lehrer-der-keiner-war.html>. For Neiman, see Neiman, *Learning from the Germans*, 275–276.

70 Dietrich Mattausch, “Wir brauchen Zusammenhalt in Europa,” interview by Klaus Hanisch, *Prager Zeitung*, March 3, 2018, <https://pragerzeitung.cz:443/die-vertreibung-war-ein-grosser-schmerz/>.

71 Interview with Heinz Schirk, April 5, 2019, 46:45–51:01.

72 Christopher Grau, “*American History X*, Cinematic Manipulation, and Moral Conversion,” *Midwest Studies in Philosophy* 34, no. 1 (2010): 52–76, 52.

73 Ernst-Otto Maetzke, “Mit Heydrich im Tanzlokal,” *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, July 25, 1977, 16.

Himmler and the film seeming rushed, is more convincing than that of Walter Jens. Its arguments about the film failing to live up to its promise and how the psychological focus offers weak material for a film also hit home. In a review for the *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, film critic Birgit Weidinger praised *Manager of Terror* for going beyond the typical “costume drama” and that the film’s “educational work” (*Aufklärungsarbeit*) included interrogating stereotypical characterizations of like “Manager of Terror” or “Hangman.” As Munich’s leading cultural publication and paper of record, the *Süddeutsche Zeitung* had previously promoted the film and reviewed Mommertz’s plays and television dramas throughout his career. Weidinger, however, also argued that the filmmakers “mistrusted” their main idea and that the psychological inserts imbalanced the drama and were hard to understand, particularly because of their academic language. For her, they also sometimes seemed too loosely connected to the following dramatic scenes. For Weidinger, the film exemplified the difficulty of understanding Heydrich and also failed to clearly portray the wider context of the Nazi State.⁷⁴

The reception of *Manager of Terror* drew attention to the problems of psychoanalyzing Nazi perpetrators on screen. This method could open a film up to charges of demonization, simplification, or obfuscation. Unlike with other films, where attempts to explore Nazi psychology are less explicit, *Manager of Terror* openly utilizes Armand Mergen’s attempt at diagnosing Heydrich’s potential psychological disorders. This attempt, while an interesting experiment, falls flat and appears dated after decades of historiography and films that attempt to move beyond the stereotype of Nazis as psychopaths or other social misfits. These psychological inserts also insinuate that Heydrich’s lust for power and attitude towards subordinates stemmed from childhood insecurities, which historians can only speculate about. Apart from the problematic psychological inserts and the relationship between Heydrich and Himmler, the dramatic scenes do not stray far from historical depictions of Heydrich from the time and Dietrich Mattausch plays the role convincingly. The early parts of the film especially rely on Shlomo Aronson’s work and, although rushed, convincingly depict Heydrich’s career path during the Weimar era. Later scenes in the film, particularly those depicting Heydrich meeting with *Einsatzgruppen* leaders or at the Wannsee Conference, also largely conform to the latest historical research at the time. However, the depiction of Heydrich’s relationship with Himmler, where he berates his superior into agreeing with his plans for either the Night of the Long Knives or the Holocaust, are ahistorical and give the impression that Himmler was both less ideological and less prone to violence than Heydrich. Lastly, *Manager of Terror* glosses over

74 Birgit Weidinger, “Schüsse auf den Doppelgänger,” *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, July 25, 1977, 19.

Heydrich's activities in occupied Czechoslovakia and awkwardly ends with an epigraph describing him as the "victim" of an assassination.

In *The Wannsee Conference* (1984), the same filmmakers would learn from the lessons of *Manager of Terror* and produce a film that largely avoids its pitfalls. Dietrich Mattausch would reprise his role as Heydrich in the latter film. *The Wannsee Conference* is both a smaller yet more ambitious film than *Manager of Terror*. Although it only depicts a 90-minute event, writing and directing this re-enactment of the Wannsee Conference would prove to be a much longer and difficult process than *Manager of Terror*. However, *The Wannsee Conference* succeeds where *Manager of Terror* falters by largely avoiding speculation about the psychological motivations of the conference participants, and also benefits from Mommertz taking the unusual step of including his bibliography in the screenplay and later making it freely available on his website decades later. This study will now turn to the production history of *The Wannsee Conference* and the Paul Mommertz archive held by the Joseph Wulf Mediothek in Berlin. This archive consists of correspondence, the screenplay, photocopied sources with handwritten notes, and other production material. These sources demonstrate the challenges encountered during pre-production as well as the production team's historiographical positions and explicit historical and political argument. Although *The Wannsee Conference* refrains from direct historical or psychological commentary, its argument about the Wannsee Conference's place in the history of the Holocaust and how it illustrates the dangers of modern bureaucracy combined with far right-wing ideology lend it a powerfully educational character, and mark it as a noteworthy contribution to public history. By letting the characters speak in the language used by Nazi officials behind closed doors, the film gives audiences an unvarnished, unblinking view of one of history's most notorious meetings.