

Chapter 3

A Production History of *The Wannsee Conference* (1984)

On December 19, 1984 at 8:15 pm, ARD aired *The Wannsee Conference*, a docudrama reenacting the Wannsee Conference in real time. Directed by Heinz Schirk and written by Paul Mommertz, *The Wannsee Conference* explores topics raised by the duo's earlier film *Reinhard Heydrich – Manager of Terror*. A pioneering film, *The Wannsee Conference* is an example of a responsible, sober depiction of Holocaust perpetrators which largely – but not entirely – refrains from stereotypes. Grounded in primary sources as well as the historiography of its time, *The Wannsee Conference* is not only an artistic interpretation of the conference but deserves consideration as a historical interpretation of Wannsee as well. Frank Bösch has correctly noted that *The Wannsee Conference* 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.¹ 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.² This chapter utilizes both archival sources and oral history interviews to demonstrate how Mommertz used primary and secondary sources (as well as the advice of Shlomo Aronson) to write his screenplay. It is through these documents and interviews that we can gain insight into how and why a small team of filmmakers in the early 1980s decided to create a film about the Wannsee Conference.³

1 Frank Bösch, “Film, NS-Vergangenheit und Geschichtswissenschaft. Von ‘Holocaust’ zu ‘Der Untergang’,” in *Vierteljahreshefte für Zeitgeschichte* 55, no. 1 (January 2007): 9.

2 Bangert, *The Nazi Past in Contemporary German Film*, 58.

3 The Paul Mommertz collection at the Joseph Wulf Mediothek contains a vast array of sources. There are many photocopies of primary and secondary sources with handwritten notes or type-written dialogue drafts on them. For this chapter, I have restricted myself to correspondence, the script, and some of his other more identifiable material instead of his marginalia written on photocopied sources.

1 Origins

During the production of *Reinhard Heydrich – Manager of Terror*, Paul Mommertz and Heinz Schirk had a conversation where they discussed potentially creating a film about the Wannsee Conference.⁴ The two left it at that, just a fleeting conversation. By the early 1980s, however, the film producer Manfred Korytowski (1936–1999), head of Infafilm GmbH in Munich, was brainstorming a film about the conference. Korytowski held both German and Israeli citizenships; he was born in Königsberg and lived with his parents in Brazilian exile before moving to Israel as a teenager in 1953. He moved on to West Berlin three years later and quickly began a career in the film industry, where his early production work included Karl May adaptations. In the mid-1970s, he founded his own production company, Infafilm; the company mainly worked with Bayerischer Rundfunk and ZDF. After seeing a copy of the Wannsee Protocol at Yad Vashem, Korytowski got an idea to produce a film about the conference.⁵ Korytowski is most famous for the Bavarian children's show *Pumuckl*, which, according to Mommertz, gave him leeway for producing other, more personal projects including *The Wannsee Conference*, which the network was unenthusiastic about:

Korytowski had this idea for awhile and he was always talking about it with the [BR] producers. He always said 'ceterum censeo, we have to make *The Wannsee Conference*.' They laughed at him because he had said that for so long. Then he somehow had a good relationship with Bayerischer Rundfunk, because he had made the successful, but different, series *Pumuckl*. He twisted their arms into agreeing to it, but they really didn't want to [produce it]. They did it as purely a matter of duty and assigned a network coordinator [*Redakteur*] to it who also didn't want to be there, and I had to work with him, who also complained about the script yet wasn't confident enough to really push through changes.⁶

The network coordinator in question is Norbert Bittmann, a man whom Mommertz later collaborated with on other projects. Bittmann appeared in a short behind-the-scenes documentary on the film and discussed its development and striving for historical accuracy.⁷

⁴ Interview with Heinz Schirk, April 5, 2019, 42:53–44:01.

⁵ Paul Mommertz, "Wannsee-Konferenz: Werkstattnotizen," in Ordner 2, "Historische Vorarbeit zum Drehbuch," Kapitel 1200 "Eichmann (Robert Kempner, Prozess Jerusalem)," Bestand Paul Mommertz, Joseph Wulf Bibliothek, Gedenk- und Bildungsstätte Haus der Wannsee-Konferenz, Berlin, 1.

⁶ Interview with Paul Mommertz, Munich, October 19, 2019, 30:13–32:33.

⁷ *Die Wannsee-Konferenz: Werkstattnotizen zum gleichnamigen Fernsehfilm des Bayerischen Rundfunks*, directed by Heinz Steike, 1984. Paul Mommertz wrote the script which Bittmann read from during his interview. See Paul Mommertz, "Wannseekonferenz: Werkstattnotizen," 1.

Infafilm's website mentions that Korytowski was seriously injured in Tel Aviv after the hijacking of Sabena Flight 571 by the Palestinian Black September Organization on May 9, 1972.⁸ An article in the *Jewish Telegraphic Agency* from May 11, 1972 contains the following account:

55-year-old Wilfred Kordovsk, a German-Jewish film producer, was reported to be recovering satisfactorily from the four bullet wounds he sustained. Kordovsk was fired on by Israeli soldiers who mistook him for one of the terrorists as they stormed into the aircraft to liberate it. He said the mistake was understandable since at the moment he was running after one of the armed women terrorists, Rima Eisa, in an attempt to subdue her.⁹

Given the spelling differences resulting from transliteration and the spelling differences of names like Korytowksi between Hebrew, English, and German, it is plausible that the *Jewish Telegraphic Agency* misspelled his name – though this does not explain the erroneous age as Korytowksi would have been 36 in 1972, not 55. An earlier *Jewish Telegraphic Agency* piece names this passenger “Vilfred Kordovski.”¹⁰ The *JTA* also got the name “Rima Eisa” wrong – this hijacker was actually named Rima Tannous.¹¹ The similarities in name and occupation, as well as general shoddy fact-checking from press agencies at the time, corroborate Infafilm's statement. Mommertz recalls Korytowski as “a phenomenon. A person with enormous temper and work mania and quick decision-making, in good spirits, and also a great team worker who treated people from the bank exactly the same as his driver – he always addressed them as “Du!” He said ‘I don’t understand anything about art, I make film!’”¹² Mommertz praises his long working relationship with Korytowski after *The Wannsee Conference* but nevertheless still (admittedly) resorts to crude antisemitic stereotypes, describing Korytowski as an easy-going business partner who cared little for German social norms – Korytowski's offices were in an apartment building near the Munich Central Station instead of

8 “Infafilm GmbH Manfred Korytowski – Manfred Korytowski,” accessed October 2, 2020, <https://www.infafilm.de/manfred-korytowski/>. Archival material shows that during the interviews, Bittman read from a script written by Mommertz.

9 “Mrs. Holtzberg Remains on Critical List; Only Miracle Can Save Her, Says Nurse,” *Jewish Telegraphic Agency*, May 15, 1972, <https://www.jta.org/1972/05/15/archive/mrs-holtzberg-remains-on-critical-list-only-miracle-can-save-her-says-nurse>.

10 “Two Passengers on Hijacked Plane Seriously Wounded; Terrorists Separate Jews from Non-Jews on Plane,” *Jewish Telegraphic Agency*, May 11, 1972, <https://www.jta.org/1972/05/11/archive/two-passengers-on-hijacked-plane-seriously-wounded-terrorists-separate-jews-from-non-jews-on-plane>.

11 Stuart Jeffries, “Four Hijackers and Three Israeli PMs: The Incredible Story of Sabena Flight 571,” *Guardian*, November 11, 2015, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/nov/11/sabena-flight-571-hijack-plane-black-september-film>.

12 Interview with Paul Mommertz, Munich, October 19, 2019, 20:21–24:35.

in a more bourgeois neighborhood – while still giving off the airs of a “very elegant metropolitan guy” instead of an “ominous *Ostjude* from the *shtetl*.”¹³

Korytowski brought Schirk on board after the writer Rolf Defrank (1926–2012) had turned in a script draft that Korytowksi was unsatisfied with.¹⁴ Defrank had written and directed the 1979 documentary *Erscheinungsform Mensch: Adolf Eichmann* as well as *Walter Hasenclever*, a biopic on the exiled Expressionist writer. DeFrank would later write a radio play about Wannsee, titled *Ihr Name Steht im Protokoll*, which premiered on WDR in 1984.¹⁵ Schirk recalled a script draft and transcripts of the Eichmann trial, along with other documents, on Korytowski’s desk.¹⁶ Schirk claimed that after mentioning working with Mommertz on *Manager of Terror*, Korytowski immediately telephoned Mommertz, who showed up in his office within two hours.¹⁷ Mommertz recalls the meeting similarly, claiming that Korytowksi had cancelled the Wannsee film project because of DeFrank’s disappointing script. No copy of this script can be found in the Paul Mommertz Archive at the GHWK memorial library. Mommertz described DeFrank’s script as something completely different than what Korytowski was looking for:

I immediately noticed that the script contained too much fiction and way too many subplots. The writer didn’t really get to Wannsee, but rather . . . a third of the film took place in Poland with the General Government boss [Hans Frank] and in the military, in SS offices, so in groups of lower-level people and that was supposed to show how dreadful it had already been handled there, how the – not only the Jews, but also the Poles – were treated. And that led everything too far into the weeds. That was also most likely the reason why they didn’t want [the script]. They probably wanted more of a focus on this conference.¹⁸

Mommertz immediately began reading about the conference, which proved to be difficult as no monograph existed at the time. Mommertz began conducting research at the Institute for Contemporary History (IfZ) in Munich. In an interview, he described his research process at length:

13 Interview with Paul Mommertz, October 19, 2019, 20:21–24:35.

14 Interview with Paul Mommertz, November 16, 2018, 8:00–10:53.

15 Rolf Defrank, “Ihr Name steht im Protokoll - Die Planung des Holocaust,” Westdeutscher Rundfunk, Köln: WDR Mediathek, Nov 23, 2020. <https://www1.wdr.de/mediathek/audio/wdr3/wdr3-hoerspiel/audio-ihr-name-steht-im-protokoll—die-planung-des-holocaust-100.html>.

16 Reconstructing these initial meetings is difficult as neither Mommertz nor Schirk recall which year they took place. As Mommertz conducted most of his scriptwriting in 1982 and 1983 and speaks of 14 months of research, it is likely that this meeting took place sometime between 1980 and early 1982. The project was also put on ice for a period, making an earlier date more likely.

17 Interview with Heinz Schirk, April 5, 2019, 12:42–14:44.

18 Interview with Paul Mommertz, Munich, October 19, 2019, 1:04–10:48.

I sat down and noticed, that I – so immediately I decided to only show the conference. I had read the protocol and then thought ‘you have to get to the bottom of this like a historian. What’s behind this? Who, what, and why? And I have to figure it out.’ And that meant that I had to go to the Institute for Contemporary History, where I had everything side by side – almost everything – and could begin to work historically there and then I noticed that it was an insane amount [of sources]. There were documents – on film, which they still had back then. And they had the complete volumes from the Nuremberg Trials, which I knew that I couldn’t avoid. And then you had to – you need a week in order to even get an overview. What’s this even about? Well, then it became very arduous, but I was very interested and, I have to say, worked with a passion for it, because suddenly I realized that I wanted to hit people over the head with what was going on, that people bureaucratically discussed something like that at a conference. Then I was on fire, I sat every minute, day by day in this institute and scooped up every fact I could get. And then by the way, there was a small bar across the street [from the IfZ] and sometimes I went there and had the facts that I’d gathered, my notes, and then I sat there and suddenly the meeting room was in my head and the people and the dialogue began. And I knew that I had to make sure that one generally informs, but that [the script] also had to be lively.¹⁹

Mommertz’s initial research at the Institute for Contemporary History included both secondary literature and primary sources, largely on microfilm. His archival collection at the Joseph Wulf Library contains several folders of photocopied sources from various archives, some of which with marginalia, including dialogue drafts. In a harsh review (discussed at length in the next chapter) of *The Wannsee Conference*, the *Der Spiegel* editor, historian, and Wehrmacht veteran Heinz Höhne alleged that IfZ staff warned Mommertz against writing a “creepy” film on the Wannsee Conference, something Mommertz vehemently denied.²⁰ Höhne also claimed that neither historians nor Mommertz had enough source material on the conference to either write a monograph or make a 90-minute film about it, so Mommertz must have resorted to invention and fantasy.²¹ A glance at Mommertz’s bibliography, as well as the fact that several monographs and edited volumes have been published since 1984 and a memorial site has opened at Wannsee, quickly disproves this charge. Mommertz’s public feud with Höhne led him to publish his bibliography, which is still available today on his website. It is important to remember that this bibliography does not just serve to defend the film against public charges of fictionalization – the primary sources are listed in the

19 Interview with Paul Mommertz, Munich, October 19, 2019, 1:04–10:48.

20 Paul Mommertz, “Weitere Stellungnahmen zur SPIEGEL-Kritik von Heinz Höhne an meinem Drehbuch,” in Ordner 1, “Dokumentation zum Film,” Kapitel 300 “Der Autor,” Bestand Paul Mommertz, Joseph Wulf Bibliothek, Gedenk- und Bildungsstätte Haus der Wannsee-Konferenz, Berlin, 1–2.

21 Heinz Höhne, “Eine Falle der Betroffenheit,” *Der Spiegel*, December 17, 1984, <http://www.spiegel.de/spiegel/print/d-13511955.html>.

script in order to lend it credibility and ward off charges that the producers were exaggerating the importance of the conference.²² These pages list sources from the Berlin Document Center (files on the Nuremberg Trial, Eichmann interrogation and trial, personnel files), an extensive list of material from the IfZ, mostly evidence taken from document collections such as the 15-volume *Trials of War Criminals before the Nuremberg Military Tribunals* and the 42-volume *Der Prozeß gegen die Hauptkriegsverbrecher*. The script also mentions circa 120 secondary sources but does not list them. Mommertz does list around 80 of these sources on his website. They range from standard works such as Hannah Arendt's *Eichmann in Jerusalem* and Raul Hilberg's *The Destruction of the European Jews* to specialist studies on the SS and Holocaust. The list also includes published primary sources such as memoirs (Albert Speer and Robert Kempner) and diaries (Hans Frank).²³ The archival collection contains an almost identical typewritten bibliography dating from 1983.²⁴ This bibliography is part of a folder including Mommertz's list of primary sources, so it presumably was included with this and other documentation accompanying the screenplay. Mommertz would later conduct research in other archives, particularly Yad Vashem, but he remained in Munich for his initial research before delivering a pitch document (*Exposé* in German) to Schirck, Infafilm, and Bayerischer Rundfunk.

2 The Pitch

Before writing the script, Mommertz wrote a pitch outlining the importance of the Wannsee Conference and justifying depicting it in the way that he wanted to. It is important to keep in mind that during the early 1980s, several conference participants were still alive (Otto Hofmann, Gerhard Klopfer, and Georg Leibbrandt) and that both Holocaust deniers and more conservative historians doubted both the protocol's authenticity and the conference's importance. Thus, it was of paramount importance – and an implicitly political project – for the

²² Paul Mommertz, *Die Wannseekonferenz*, Drehbuch von Paul Mommertz, 1983, Bestand Paul Mommertz, Joseph Wulf Bibliothek, Gedenk- und Bildungsstätte Haus der Wannsee-Konferenz, Berlin, 135–137.

²³ Paul Mommertz, "Literatur in „Die Wannseekonferenz“: Quellen Zum Film / Presseecho," accessed October 2, 2020, <http://www.paul-mommertz.de/quellen01.html>.

²⁴ Paul Mommertz, "Literatur Drehbuch 'Wannseekonferenz' SEKUNDÄRLITERATUR," 1983, in Ordner 2, "Historische Vorarbeit zum Drehbuch," Kap. 1000 "Quellen (IMT, Literatur)" Bestand Paul Mommertz, Joseph Wulf Bibliothek, Gedenk- und Bildungsstätte Haus der Wannsee-Konferenz, Berlin, 1–3.

filmmakers to justify including information outside of the protocol's scope, the most important of which was open discussion of both mass murder that had already taken place and future plans for industrial-scale genocide. The pitch document and others are designed to provide the script with ironclad proof of complicity on the part of the conference participants – to show not only that the Holocaust was common knowledge in the upper echelons of government, but also to show that every single participant would have either had full knowledge of the mass murder campaign or would have at least gotten wind of it beforehand – concluding that it would have been ludicrous for these men to meet and speak in euphemisms about what everyone already knew was going on. The only complete surviving pitch document (titled “Exposé”) focuses solely on historical justifications for the coming screenplay. Later, scattered documents in the archives help piece together filming strategies, but they remain fragmentary. Additionally, Mommertz wanted to avoid what he saw as the dramatic pitfalls and shortcuts of the American series *Holocaust*:

... that [*Holocaust*] was therefore purely fictional and I was very fond of believing that with Meryl Streep etc., the film had made a tremendous impression, and I was delighted that this subject had finally been addressed by the Americans, who are not as meticulous as we are in these matters, so that a huge audience finally woke up and looked at it. On the other hand, I was uncomfortable with it. I knew that this was exactly what I wanted to avoid with the Wannsee Conference, to somehow arouse emotions and to work with fictional tricks and dramaturgical finesse in order to capture and sway the audience.²⁵

The pitch document, or exposé, is nineteen pages long and predates the script (its subtitle is “Reflections on a planned screenplay about the Wannsee Conference”). It can be dated to either 1981 or 1982, as Mommertz claims he spent fourteen months researching. A note claims that it was sent to Bayerischer Rundfunk, Infafilm, and to Heinz Schirk.²⁶ The exposé refrains from commentary on filming or writing strategies and instead focuses on a historical justification for dedicating an entire film to the Wannsee Conference. It is, at its core, a historiographical essay and argument for the Wannsee Conference's significance. At the beginning of his pitch, Mommertz cites a commentary by the Nuremberg Trial defense lawyer and unrepentant Nazi Rudolf Aschenauer, who edited the 1980 publication of

25 Interview with Paul Mommertz, November 16, 2018, 12:56–14:06.

26 Paul Mommertz, Exposé, “Überlegungen zu einem geplanten Drehbuch über die WANNSEE-KONFERENZ”, undated, in Ordner 1, “Dokumentation zum Film,” Kap. 300 “Der Autor” Bestand Paul Mommertz, Joseph Wulf Bibliothek, Gedenk- und Bildungsstätte Haus der Wannsee-Konferenz, Berlin, 1. The first page of this document also contains a handwritten note: “at the beginning of the research.”

Eichmann's memoirs. Aschenauer claimed that the Wannsee Conference was only about "resettlement" and that the protocol is unreliable.²⁷ It is important to note that this edition of Eichmann's memoirs was published by the far-right, revisionist Druffel Verlag in 1980 – so claims about the Wannsee Conference being unimportant were in the public sphere and could be used by far-right skeptics to dismiss the planned film.²⁸ Mommertz then devotes the majority of his pitch document to refuting Aschenauer's claim. In order to refute it, Mommertz relies on the strategy of testing the protocol's veracity by investigating what each conference participant would have known about the Holocaust at the time of the meeting. For him, it was important to document the participants' prior knowledge "because the more they had known, the less one had to beat around the bush."²⁹ Mommertz states that these men were "completely in the picture" and that they would have been relieved that Heydrich "took full responsibility" for the Holocaust and because "one finally knew how one could make the Führer's will a practical and technical reality."³⁰ Mommertz further discusses denialist and neo-Nazi claims about the Holocaust, noting that the campaign of mass murder in the East was widespread knowledge in German governmental circles, arguing that it is implausible that the Wannsee participants could not have known about what had been happening up until that point – he notes that even if a document or policy was labeled "top secret," it does not mean that knowledge of it did not travel through the various state and Nazi Party organizations.³¹ One shocking aspect of this document is how Mommertz anticipates some of the criticism Heinz Höhne would level at him after the film's release – Höhne's line of argument is uncomfortably similar to some of the revisionist and denialist arguments presented here. Mommertz also correctly notes that many of the participants knew each other and had worked together before the conference – something that *Conspiracy* ignores in its characterization of Stuckart and Klopfer's encounter. He argues that these prior relationships meant that "the usually open, secretive, but also eye-winking and mutually-agreed upon interactions at such conferences had already been worked out."³² The exposé continues, with Mommertz listing each participant and discussing reasons they would have had prior knowledge of the mass murder campaign – to varying degrees – by the time of the conference. He

²⁷ Mommertz, Exposé, 1.

²⁸ See Adolf Eichmann, *Ich, Adolf Eichmann: ein historischer Zeugenbericht*, ed. Rudolf Aschenauer (Leoni am Starnberger See: Druffel, 1980).

²⁹ Mommertz, Exposé, 2.

³⁰ Mommertz, Exposé, 2.

³¹ Mommertz, Exposé, 3.

³² Mommertz, Exposé, 5.

notes that “it would be a downright desperate assumption, namely that everyone would overly-diplomatically tiptoe around each other’s ‘secret knowledge.’”³³

Towards the end of the pitch document, Mommertz moves beyond historical analysis of the Wannsee Conference participants and whether they had prior knowledge of mass killings. In this section, he discusses how best to depict these men in the film and provides statements about the purpose of the conference and its meaning for an audience in the 1980s. He notes that the conference and all of the sources surrounding it, such as the protocol “[make] sense, everything becomes alive, simply comprehensible and plausible, when one alleges that here, ‘civilized people,’ but also ‘pioneers of the future in an ideological war’ reconcile both aspects: the great, difficult task and the ‘decent’ method.”³⁴

The pitch document is not without its flaws – Mommertz wrote it before his intensive research process, and it contains errors that appear in the final cut – for instance, the claim that the meeting took place in the Interpol villa. Nevertheless, it is forcefully argued and Mommertz convincingly justifies his decision to have the conference participants speak openly about genocide instead of in euphemism, as a film that remained in the world of euphemisms would fail to capture an audience’s attention and would contribute to the erroneous assumption that the protocol is a verbatim transcript of what was said at Wannsee. Nevertheless, one would have to be exceedingly charitable to the conference participants to read the protocol as being about anything other than genocide or, as some critics alleged, “only about resettlement.” As Alex J. Kay has noted, it only “takes little reading between the lines to recognize the murderous intentions of the conference participants.”³⁵ Mommertz noted this aspect of the protocol in the pitch, forcefully arguing that Heydrich did not have “the slightest reason” to “not call things by name, especially with people that he had invited himself.”³⁶ In a line of argument that he would later use in *Der Spiegel*, Mommertz also noted that it was “completely unrealistic” to believe that Heydrich would have asked the participants to keep quiet for ninety minutes about the genocidal methods that the majority of them either knew about or were directly involved with, arguing that Heydrich was known for his “intentionally provocative, undiplomatic language” and would probably have not behaved any differently on January 20, 1942.³⁷ Finally, Mommertz vehemently argued against what he saw as a whitewashing or apologetic depiction of the Wannsee Conference participants:

³³ Mommertz, Exposé, 9.

³⁴ Mommertz, Exposé, 15.

³⁵ Kay, “Speaking the Unspeakable,” 188.

³⁶ Mommertz, Exposé, 18.

³⁷ Mommertz, Exposé, 18.

It would obviously not only be historically false, but also gratuitous beyond measure if we wanted to do the participating gentlemen a favor and let them appear milder and less harmful than they were and as they, when they had the opportunity to, depicted themselves.³⁸

This last statement prefigures Mommertz's response to charges of demonization leveled at the film by some, mostly German, critics; it also seems to be an implicit response to the negative reviews of his previous film *Reinhard Heydrich – Manager of Terror* from critics such as Walter Jens, who charged him with depicting a “demonic” Heydrich. Furthermore, it points to film's political and educational project: let the perpetrators speak as they did, that is dramatic enough. In an interview, Mommertz defended this position at length:

. . . it had always been a problem for me when I depicted historical events on film, that people should understand it. And here I soon realized that they didn't have to understand anything. They just have to understand that that's how [the Nazis] talked. You didn't have to understand anything in detail, whether quarter Jew, eighth Jew or, whether the Italians – you just have to understand how, when you're at a conference – if someone had walked past a door and listened, what he heard would have nailed him in place because he thought: “No, listen, this can't be true.” The point was to show that a conference – is it in an inappropriate tone, [are people] talking about killing millions, so – but don't amplify that, but keep it in the blabbering tone of the conference. And it couldn't be otherwise – I was sure – it couldn't have been otherwise. It must have been so. Everything also fit together. And so, that you have to keep [the film] in this anti-dramaturgical, dry way. Then I did nothing more to make it easier for the viewer to understand any connections. I didn't want them to understand them. I can imagine that when I'm at a big meeting at BMW, that it would also fascinate me even though I don't understand the half of it. I would marvel at how these experts exchange ideas about everything so casually. That would fascinate me. That is how I imagined it.³⁹

Mommertz advocated a radical experiment in historical filmmaking: throwing the viewer into the deep end of the pool, so to speak, and immersing them in a microcosm of a historical world – in this case, the conference room. Instead of making a conventional, didactic historical film, where everything is introduced slowly for the viewer, Mommertz instead opted for a dense, sometimes alienating method which sought to place viewers in the room with people using the same type of language as the various groups of participants would have. He also claimed that he did not aim to make the film “didactic”:⁴⁰

³⁸ Mommertz, *Exposé*, 19.

³⁹ Interview with Paul Mommertz, Munich, October 19, 2019, Part 2, 02:58–06:55.

⁴⁰ Interview with Paul Mommertz, November 16, 2018, 35:46–37:19.

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. There is this problem, what is art, what is information? 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.

Whether Mommertz only "presented the facts" is certainly disputable, but his point about the film's didactic nature lying in the "thing itself" is much more important. It echoes Elvira Neuendank's argument about historical films containing "embedded pedagogy."⁴¹ 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.⁴²

The most valuable educational aspect of films depicting the Wannsee Conference is not that they go into minute details about the participants and the prerogatives of every Nazi ministry, but they depict how "civilized," "ordinary men" discussed some of the most inhumane crimes imaginable as if they were discussing logistical strategies for some sort of industrial product. It is the depiction of the language of genocide itself and the power dynamics at work within the German government, not whether or not the filmmakers spell everything out for even the most inattentive viewer, which makes these films valuable contributions to the historical – and Holocaust – film genres.

Fragments of an unnamed and undated document outline some of Mommertz's writing strategies and his vision for the film. Unlike the main pitch document, these fragments spend more time discussing questions of drama and the larger questions to be addressed by the film. One fragment discusses the "politeness and objectivity and competence and inconspicuousness and banality" of the meeting and argues that "exactly this makes it so frightening, because one encounters oneself."⁴³ It is the very incongruity of the meeting's location with its

⁴¹ Neuendank, *Film als Pädagogisches Setting*, 9.

⁴² Edgar Lersch, "Vom „SS-Staat“ Zu „Auschwitz“ | Zeitgeschichte | Online," *zeitgeschichte online*, March 1, 2004, <https://zeitgeschichte-online.de/themen/vom-ss-staat-zu-auschwitz>.

⁴³ Paul Mommertz, *Fragment of an Untitled Document on Filming Strategies*, undated, in Ordner 6, "Holocaust: Ideologie, Chronologie, Kompetenzen," Bestand Paul Mommertz, Joseph Wulf Bibliothek, Gedenk- und Bildungsstätte Haus der Wannsee-Konferenz, Berlin, 9.

subject, the banality of its participants and of the protocol that have made it so fascinating for historians and filmmakers. This same fragment also calls for these aspects of the conference to be “presented without shrill tones” and that “the quieter, simpler, more natural the report, the more documentary-like and therefore believable it will be. All superimposed drama would also be inappropriate considering the topic.”⁴⁴ Here, Mommertz called for something different than the “Holocaust piety” that is the staple of conventional Holocaust dramas.⁴⁵ Instead, he pleaded for a drama that did not need to “invent” dramatic turns because the event and the language the perpetrators used are frightening enough. In this sense, he was operating in the tradition of playwrights like Peter Weiss and Rolf Hochhuth – unsurprising given Mommertz’s start as a playwright, especially with his piece *Aktion T4*.⁴⁶ Mommertz also wanted the entire film to take place in the Wannsee villa and said that the film should last ninety minutes, just as the conference itself did. Mommertz states that this dramatic strategy is also appropriate because “there is enough dramatic tension [in the piece] without spectacular dramatic action, without a dramatic antagonist as devil’s advocate, and without dramatic loud, argumentative dialogue.”⁴⁷

Other fragments of pre-production documents further outline strategies for depicting the conference. One draft, possibly of the same document discussed above, leans heavily on Arendt’s banality-of-evil concept when it outlines the film’s theme:

Were all of these outwardly so civilized gentlemen closeted sadists, bloodthirsty racists, murderous antisemites?

One will have to look for the answer elsewhere. In the formula of the banality of evil. There isn’t another one.

Their simple, everyday and typical functionality, that constantly repeats itself in other contexts: to analyze, make it understandable and comprehensible without excusing them – that is, beyond the historical content, the topic.⁴⁸

44 Mommertz, Fragment of an Untitled Document on Filming Strategies, 9.

45 See Rose, *Mourning Becomes the Law*, 43–48, and Matthew Boswell, *Holocaust Impiety in Literature, Popular Music and Film*, (Basingstoke; New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011).

46 See Paul Mommertz, *Aktion T4 – Schauspiel in fünf Bildern*, Textbuch (Berlin: Theaterverlag Desch, 2016).

47 Mommertz, Fragment of an Untitled Document on Filming Strategies, 9.

48 Paul Mommertz, Draft of an Untitled Document on Filming Strategies, undated, in Ordner 3, “Personen. Dokumente zu Heydrich, Eichmann, Stuckart,” subfolder “Stuckart,” Bestand Paul Mommertz, Joseph Wulf Bibliothek, Gedenk- und Bildungsstätte Haus der Wannsee-Konferenz, Berlin, 5.

The production's strong focus on the banality of evil (as well as intentionalism, which is discussed below) marks it as a product of the early 1980s. Current research on Holocaust perpetrators has called the banality of evil archetype and Hannah Arendt's conclusions in *Eichmann in Jerusalem* into question, especially when applied to Eichmann and other RSHA and SD functionaries, who in reality were highly ideologically-motivated "true believers," not Arendt's banal bureaucrats, an idea which has since been rendered into caricature.⁴⁹ This strategic document further discusses dramatic aspects of the film. At the very beginning, Mommertz declared that the film does not have a plot in the standard sense of the term, stating that instead, the film is about a "temporal, situational, and behavioral analysis with the tools of dramatic dialogue."⁵⁰

Because it is an early draft, this document states that the primary sources are the Wannsee Protocol and transcripts of Eichmann's interrogation and trial. He notes his previous work with Dr. Armand Mergen on Heydrich's personality for *Manager of Terror* and says that the production can depict Heydrich, Müller, and Eichmann without legal difficulties. This draft predates the pitch document (exposé) discussed above, and this can be determined because it offers a completely different strategy for depicting the other conference participants: composite characters. Curiously, this draft states that a "historically accurate characterization [of the remaining conference participants] is neither possible nor necessary nor desirable."⁵¹ Mommertz justifies this statement by claiming that, first of all, it would be impossible due to the paucity of source material on the participants, and that it would furthermore be "undesirable due to the legal implications." Lastly, he claims that depicting them was unnecessary because it was more important to get the "inner truth" across rather than focusing on the "surface accuracy" of depicting these participants as real individuals with names and personalities.⁵² Mommertz and the production team obviously changed their minds in respect to this last point, because much of Mommertz's later research concerns the remaining participants. He went to great lengths to depict them accurately.

In subsequent research material, as well as in the script, the characters are mentioned by name – though the released film avoids doing so in order to avoid legal trouble. Nevertheless, this mention of potential legal issues in this early production memo draft illustrates the West German public television climate at the beginning of the 1980s: depiction of perpetrators was clearly acceptable if limited

49 Bettina Stangneth, *Eichmann Before Jerusalem: The Unexamined Life of a Mass Murderer*, trans. Ruth Martin (New York: Vintage, 2015), 219–220, Cesarani, *Eichmann* 343–344.

50 Mommertz, Draft of an Untitled Document on Filming Strategies, 6.

51 Mommertz, Draft of an Untitled Document on Filming Strategies, 6.

52 Mommertz, Draft of an Untitled Document on Filming Strategies, 6.

to the short list of infamous Nazis like Heydrich and Eichmann. But once a writer started to go beyond the SS and household names, they could run into trouble. The caution advised here demonstrates that West German society, even after the recent airing of *Holocaust*, was largely unwilling to discuss or confront those perpetrators who had not worn SS uniforms. Much like the “clean Wehrmacht” myth, which posits that the SS was solely responsible for the Holocaust and other wartime atrocities, this *Zeitgeist* rejected the possibility that those responsible also wore civilian suits; they reintegrated relatively painlessly into postwar West German society.⁵³ It is also significant to note that an official from Bayerischer Rundfunk (*Redakteur* Norbert Bittmann) always had a say over the script and, owing to the network’s conservative bent, was more likely to remain cautious in such matters. Heinz Schirk directly addressed this in an interview, stating that the network put the project on ice because of legal concerns and that it only came back to life when the filmmakers decided to name characters by their functions and ranks instead of names.⁵⁴ Mommertz rejected this attitude but was possibly hamstrung by network officials – in an interview, he complained about the conservatism of Bayerischer Rundfunk and about what he saw as a stifling atmosphere and lack of enthusiasm for the project.⁵⁵ In another interview, however, Mommertz praised executive producer Siegfried Glökler for his easy-going nature and claimed that although Bayerischer Rundfunk was reluctant to produce the film, they agreed to do so without much protest, likely because of Glökler’s initiative and Korytowski’s standing.⁵⁶

An undated internal memo outlines the “most important documents” about the Wannsee Conference. This memo, in the style of an annotated bibliography, discusses important sources proving that the various conference participants knew about the Holocaust and could not convincingly claim ignorance after the war. Mommertz believed that these sources were important because during production, he and the producers wanted to ensure that the conference participants actually spoke about mass murder during the conference. Both conference participants themselves and Holocaust deniers had used the protocol’s euphemistic lan-

53 For the Myth of the Clean Wehrmacht, see Wolfram Wette, *The Wehrmacht: History, Myth, Reality*, trans. Deborah Lucas Schneider (Cambridge, Mass.; London: Harvard University Press, 2007).

54 Interview with Heinz Schirk, April 5, 2019, 27:23–31:06.

55 Interview with Paul Mommertz, Munich, October 19, 2019, Part 1, 30:13–32:33.

56 Interview with Paul Mommertz, Munich, October 19, 2019, Part 1, 26:45–29:40.

guage to argue that murder was not discussed at the meeting.⁵⁷ At the beginning of this document, Mommertz mentioned that “evidence and evidentiary documents for the shared knowledge (*Mitwisserschaft*) of the individual conference participants regarding the Final Solution” can be provided to the production team.⁵⁸ He first cites a letter dated October 25, 1941 from Dr. Erhard Wetzel, a lawyer and so-called Jewish expert for the Reich Ministry for the Occupied Eastern Territories.⁵⁹ This letter is the first known mention of gas chambers within the Nazi government and Mommertz cites it as proof that the participants had to know about extermination methods in occupied Poland. Mommertz calls the letter “the key document for our piece” and argues that “it shows that it [was] possible to speak openly” about mass murder during the conference, the *Einsatzgruppen* massacres, and the “shift from bullets to gas” in the second half of 1941, “exactly that which never ever could have been discussed according to the opinions of the doubters of the Wannsee topic . . .”⁶⁰ He continues, noting that the letter proves, among other things, that Wetzel knew about the use of carbon monoxide gas during the T4 program and at the extermination camp Chełmno – and since Wetzel was a subordinate of the Wannsee participants Alfred Meyer and Georg Leibbrandt, they would have known about it as well. He also notes that the letter proves Eichmann’s involvement in the process and that it proves that the conference participants Meyer, Leibbrandt, Lange, and Eichmann had “full knowledge” of the unfolding genocidal campaign in the General Government and occupied parts of the Soviet Union.⁶¹ He continues, noting that this same knowledge is obvious on the part of Heydrich and Müller, also arguing that it “would be absurd” if other SS and SD officials like Eberhard Schöngarth and Otto Hofmann had been kept in the dark about these developments.⁶² Mommertz notes evidence for Stuckart’s prior knowledge (via reports from his subordinate Bernhard Lösener) and Martin Luther’s complicity (Luther had received reports from the *Einsatzgruppen*). Nevertheless, this document mistakenly identifies Stuckart as Hey-

57 Paul Mommertz, “Wannseekonferenz – Die wichtigsten Dokumente,” 1982 or 1983, in Ordner 6, “Holocaust: Ideologie, Chronologie, Kompetenzen,” Bestand Paul Mommertz, Joseph Wulf Bibliothek, Gedenk- und Bildungsstätte Haus der Wannsee-Konferenz, Berlin, 1–3.

58 Mommertz, “Wannseekonferenz – Die wichtigsten Dokumente,” 1.

59 See Wetzel, “Draft of Letter to the Reich Commissioner for the East Concerning Proposed Extermination Facilities and Work Camps for Jews,” Harvard Law School Nuremberg Trials Project, accessed October 6, 2020, <http://nuremberg.law.harvard.edu/documents/1675-draft-of-letter-to-the-reich?q=evidence:%22NO-365%22#p.1>, October 25, 1941.

60 Mommertz, “Wannseekonferenz – Die wichtigsten Dokumente,” 1.

61 Mommertz, “Wannseekonferenz – Die wichtigsten Dokumente,” 1–2.

62 Mommertz, “Wannseekonferenz – Die wichtigsten Dokumente,” 2.

drich's contact in the German Foreign Office (this was actually Luther).⁶³ The list of sources continues, listing documents proving the prior knowledge of other participants and connecting the T4 euthanasia program with the Holocaust.⁶⁴ Mommertz spends so much time on proving prior knowledge because, as discussed in the following chapter, many skeptical historians and others with more explicit political agendas doubted the importance of the Wannsee Conference and argued that the protocol proved that the participants "only" discussed "resettlement," not genocide. This document is to ensure that the script is on solid historiographic ground. At the end of this memo, Mommertz sums up the state of affairs at the conference:

In short: everything is in its beginnings, everything is in flux, everything under discussion – Final Solution in Russian territory, in the General Government, in the "reclaimed" German Eastern Territory, this also and more, and the stakeholders in the SS, Nazi Party, ministerial bureaucracy, and officials in the occupied territories took part at least in the respect of trying to defend their areas of competencies from interference.

Of course it is impossible to prove which details of the possible solutions were discussed. However, it is permitted to infer that they were not forced to.

On the basis of this supported hypothesis, the author permits himself to bring up the now-known relevant facts for discussion, as they result in a total and credible, sufficiently informative image for the audience.⁶⁵

Granted, as this is part of an internal film production document and not an academic essay, Mommertz refrains from hedging. Even the most nuanced historical films inevitably simplify complex histories and scholarly debate – multiperspectivity, for example, is difficult to portray on film (with the possible exception of of homages to Kurosawa's *Rashomon*). In the case of *The Wannsee Conference*, the filmmakers consequently refused to include the perspectives of victims or bystanders, instead placing the audience at the meeting with perpetrators. There is no protagonist for the audience to root for, no sympathetic figure with whom they can identify. Most academic publications on historical films emphasize the need for identification and sympathetic protagonists, but *The Wannsee Conference* flatly refuses to follow this convention, which arguably gives the film more power to shock audiences. There is no counternarrative, no victims with whom to sympathize, no moralizing narrator to tell the audience what to think. Instead, the audience is left alone with the participants' words.

⁶³ Mommertz, "Wannseekonferenz – Die wichtigsten Dokumente," 2.

⁶⁴ Mommertz, "Wannseekonferenz – Die wichtigsten Dokumente," 3–5.

⁶⁵ Mommertz, "Wannseekonferenz – Die wichtigsten Dokumente," 6–7.

3 Writing the Screenplay

Mommertz directly credits the 1957 courtroom film *12 Angry Men* as an inspiration during the writing process:

When writing this *Wannsee Conference*, I of course thought of *12 Angry Men*. That always encouraged me. I thought: “It worked once, a one-room piece, twelve people sitting around a table and talking, talking, so [there was] unity of time and place without action, without exterior shots. So in principle you can do that.” That encouraged me at the time even though I knew that *12 Angry Men* has an element of tension in it because that’s what it’s all about – it’s about the defendant’s head: guilty or not guilty. That was something completely different. But it was just the reality of a one-room piece.⁶⁶

Mommertz further describes the writing process as relatively quick (after his fourteen-month research period), arguing that his teenage experiences around Nazi officials helped him with writing the dialogue:

[Writing the script] went very slowly at first and then rapidly in three weeks – or even less – I suddenly had the text together and namely – with me everything is done through dialogue. When I started to let people speak [on the page], that’s when it started rolling. It was to my advantage . . . that I really knew how people [back then] talked, especially those from the Nazi Party. Actually, I can . . . the Nazi jargon was really something that . . . I had been attentive to, I studied German language and literature for a reason. I had an ear for it. Where I could hear it was at my parents’ company, where [the local Nazis] all showed up . . .⁶⁷

The only surviving example of the screenplay included in the Paul Mommertz archival collections is the 134-page shooting script, dated 1983. Based on the dates of other sources, the shooting script was likely completed sometime after April 1983 (the film would air in December of that year). The numerous instances of revised pages typed on different typewriters – at least three different typewriters (page 44A is a good example of such a revision) – point to this version likely being the shooting script. It is common practice for shooting scripts to have revisions typed just before or during filming, sometimes on differently colored paper in order to make these new script revisions clear. Since the script here is a black and white photocopy, the different typewritten fonts are the only clue to this draft’s status as the shooting script. The script is divided into thematic chapters and contains several inserts with notes for the director and cast about the Wannsee Conference and its participants.

⁶⁶ Interview with Paul Mommertz, November 16, 2018, 15:06–16:04.

⁶⁷ Interview with Paul Mommertz, November 16, 2018, 1:03–10:48. See also Viktor Klemperer’s influential study *LTI: Notizbuch eines Philologen* (Ditzingen: Reclam, 2018).

A script is not merely a transcript of a film's dialogue. Scripts also include stage directions and commentary on character behavior, which help reveal authorial intent. Furthermore, *The Wannsee Conference* depends largely on dialogue to get its historical message across, which makes access to the script invaluable. The script uses the traditional three act-structure, with the second act subdivided into three parts. The three acts are titled "Prelude," "The Conference," and "Epilogue." The script also contains several sections discussing the sources or historical situation in order to help the director and cast. These inserts reveal character motivations and larger themes that Mommertz wanted to make clear in the film. The screenplay ends with Mommertz's bibliography. The chapter titled "The Conference" is subdivided into three chapters named for – and focusing on – the characters Heydrich, Luther, and Stuckart. The "Prelude" covers the arrival of the participants and depicts a pre-meeting between Heydrich and other participants from the SS and RSHA (plus Luther). This section sets up the power dynamic at the conference; it makes clear that one of the meeting's aims is to consolidate Heydrich's power and assert SS dominance over the various civilian ministries represented at Wannsee. The conference itself begins on page 36 of the script and is divided into three sections. The first is "Part A: Heydrich – The Final Solution" and covers Heydrich's presentation on anti-Jewish measures up to that point and largely follows the protocol. This section is the longest part of the script, covering forty-one pages.⁶⁸ The next section, titled "The Conference: Part B: Luther – The Foreign Jews" focuses on possible issues with implementing anti-Jewish policy in occupied foreign countries as well as allied nations like Hungary and Italy. The final section of the script covering the meeting itself is titled "The Conference: Part C: Stuckart – The *Mischlinge*" and is the film's climax – by this point, everyone at the table knows what has been going on and how operations are to progress from here on out. It is here where Stuckart puts forth most of his arguments about sterilization versus murder and the legal issues that would rise if the state annulled mixed marriages *en masse*. The script's final section, "Epilogue" (*Nachspiel*) covers the participants' departure and Heydrich's fireside chat with Müller and Eichmann over cognac, where he expresses relief at the relatively smooth course of the day's events.

The script notes that the setting should match the architectural plans of the Wannsee villa and that the Wannsee shore will appear through a window.⁶⁹ The character list makes the production team's concern about legal action clear. With

68 Mommertz, *Die Wannseekonferenz*, Drehbuch, 36.

69 Mommertz, *Die Wannseekonferenz*, Drehbuch, i.

the exceptions of Heydrich, Müller, and Eichmann, the participants are listed by their ranks. Many of the characters are listed as *Staatsekretäre*. According to Mark Roseman, this is a governmental rank “analogous to undersecretary of state in the United States or permanent secretary in the British civil service or their respective deputies.” Roseman notes that because of the lack of an actual cabinet, “the fifty or so *Staatsekretäre* . . . were the essential medium of policy coordination . . . [m]eetings between the *Staatsekretäre* were in effect a substitute for cabinet government.”⁷⁰ Stuckart, for example, is listed as “First *Staatssekretär* (41), Reich Ministry of Interior. Named Stuckart in script.” All other characters are similarly listed, with rank having priority over name. Some of the participants do not even have their ages listed.⁷¹ In the actual screenplay, the characters are named when they have lines or when they perform an action, but other characters only refer to them by rank, never their names. The credits sequence lists the fates of Heydrich, Eichmann, Freisler, and Stuckart, and also lists all participants by name. The script concludes with the list of primary sources discussed above.⁷² It is important to note, however, that although Mommertz was trained in historical methods and did indeed conduct archival research, he also relied on the help of a historical advisor – the same one he had sought help from for his previous film, *Reinhard Heydrich – Manager of Terror*.

Unlike in *Manager of Terror*, the Israeli historian Shlomo Aronson was credited as the film’s historical advisor and later gave interviews promoting the film. After the film’s release, he was embroiled in a controversy involving Heinz Höhne’s negative review in *Der Spiegel* and testy correspondence between Aronson and Mommertz has survived – the following chapter will examine this correspondence in detail and discuss Aronson’s reservations about the film. Aronson was more closely involved with research for *The Wannsee Conference* than he had been with the previous film; owing to Manfred Korytowski’s Israeli citizenship and Mommertz’s previous collaboration with Aronson, both Mommertz and Korytowski again traveled to Israel during the research process, mainly visiting Yad Vashem, among other research institutions. One surviving document consists of Aronson’s handwritten notes on the Wannsee Conference, with Mommertz’s comments and underlining in red ink. This document outlines various historiographical questions and problems surrounding the conference. Aronson notes that the first major issue is the “timing of the Final Solution and the conference,”

⁷⁰ Roseman, *The Wannsee Conference and the Final Solution: A Reconsideration*, 60–61. See also O’Byrne, “Nazi Constitutional Designs.”

⁷¹ Mommertz, *Die Wannseekonferenz*, Drehbuch, ii.

⁷² Mommertz, *Die Wannseekonferenz*, Drehbuch.

arguing that the decision to murder all European Jews was likely reached in October 1941.⁷³ Aronson justifies this date by listing several factors ranging from looming American entry into the war, radicalizing Nazi ideology, a desire for “revenge” against the Jews (according to Nazi doctrine, the Jews themselves were responsible for the war’s outbreak), and Hitler’s meeting with the Grand Mufti of Jerusalem, Haj Amin Al-Husseini.⁷⁴ Aronson frequently cited his then-newly published article “Die dreifache Falle” (The Triple Trap) as a key resource for Mommertz. In this article, Aronson claims that the Al-Husseini had not only allied with Hitler, but that he had also collaborated in planning the Holocaust.⁷⁵ Some contemporary historians, including Jeffrey Herf, expert on Nazi propaganda campaigns in North Africa and the rest of the Arab world, reject this interpretation. Herf argues that this characterization of the Grand Mufti was given new life in 2015 by Israeli prime minister Benjamin Netanyahu and has, historiographically speaking, fallen by the wayside – for him, no “authoritative historians of the decision-making sequence leading to the Holocaust” ascribe any importance to Al-Husseini.⁷⁶ Gerhard Weinberg, leading German historian of diplomacy, has ascribed importance to Al-Husseini’s meeting with Hitler, but with a view towards potential German expansion in the Middle East and subsequent murder of Jews living there.⁷⁷ Herf states that the claim about Al-Husseini’s importance for the Holocaust “rests partly on a misinterpretation of a meeting that the two had in Berlin on November 28, 1941.”⁷⁸ Recently, David Modatel also addressed the November 28 meeting, arguing that “biographical research on the mufti tends to overestimate his influence in Berlin.”⁷⁹ In Aronson’s notes on Wannsee, he mentions this same meeting as proof of Al-Hussen’s connection.⁸⁰ Herf discusses this misinterpretation of Al-Hussen’s meeting with Hitler, showing that there is no evidence of Al-Hussen’s importance to Nazi decision-making in Europe (Herf does detail Al-Hussen’s importance as a collaborator in North Africa and Palestine), arguing that previous interpretations that attempt to draw a connection between Al-Hussen’s Berlin visit and

73 Shlomo Aronson, “Wannseekonferenz,” 1983, Private Archive Paul Mommertz, Munich, 1.

74 Aronson, “Wannseekonferenz,” 1.

75 Aronson, “Die dreifache Falle. Hitlers Judenpolitik, die Alliierten und die Juden,” *Vierteljahrshefte für Zeitgeschichte* 32, no. 1 (1984): 29–65, 64.

76 Jeffrey Herf, “Haj Amin Al-Husseini, the Nazis and the Holocaust: The Origins, Nature and Aftereffects of Collaboration,” *Jewish Political Studies Review* 26, no. 3/4 (2014): 13–37, 14.

77 Gerhard L. Weinberg, *A World at Arms: A Global History of World War II* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 508–509.

78 Herf, “Haj Amin Al-Husseini,” 18.

79 David Modatel, *Islam and Nazi Germany’s War*, (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2014), 43.

80 Aronson, “Wannseekonferenz,” 1.

the timing of the Wannsee Conference are wild exaggerations.⁸¹ Herf's argument is bolstered by the fact that Eichmann sent the initial invitations to the conference on November 29, 1941, meaning that because they were sent one day after Al-Huseni's visit, Eichmann would have had less than twenty-four hours' notice to prepare the invitations for a conference which resulted from Göring's letter to Heydrich from July 31, 1941.⁸² In the final version of the script, the Grand Mufti only appears in one line. Luther mentions him as an ally as a reason for potentially deporting Jews to Madagascar instead of Palestine.⁸³ Nevertheless, Aronson's listing of Al-Husseini in his notes and his own article claiming that Al-Huseni was directly involved in the Holocaust reveals a degree of Israeli nationalism that fortunately had little impact on the ultimately released film.

Aronson's notes on Wannsee continue, remarking that the "purpose of the conference" was another historical question that Mommertz would have to grapple with. He correctly points out – contrary to later statements in promotional material for the film – that the meeting was not about deciding whether or not the Holocaust would happen, but about the SS and RSHA bringing the civilian ministries into line, thereby "[preventing] an unending amount of bureaucratic and internal political difficulties."⁸⁴ According to Aronson, the potential "difficulties" to be solved at Wannsee included the question of *Mischlinge* and mixed marriages, keeping the meeting and its subject matter secret, "Hitler's political goal" to make the rest of Germany complicit in the Holocaust, and "Heydrich's goal to secure the SS' complete control" of the Holocaust, but also "guarantee the participation of the civilian ministries."⁸⁵

Aronson's notes on the historiographical problems surrounding Wannsee end here and the document shifts to suggestions for "possible script changes." He asked Mommertz to change the characterization of Müller in the opening scene (the draft Aronson is commenting on is not present in either Mommertz archival collection), arguing that his attitude towards other civil servants was "barely historically supportable" and that Lange's tipsy, reckless behavior should also be removed. Instead, Aronson argues that the characters should discuss meetings Hitler had attended in recent months, including the one with Al-Huseni.⁸⁶ Another of Aronson's suggestions that Mommertz ignored was one advocating introducing

⁸¹ Herf, "Haj Amin Al-Husseini," 24–25.

⁸² See Dokument 4.2, "Erste Einladung Heydrichs an Luther, 29. November 1941" in Kampe and Klein, *Die Wannsee-Konferenz*, 32–33.

⁸³ Mommertz, *Die Wannseekonferenz*, Drehbuch, 24.

⁸⁴ Aronson, "Wannseekonferenz," 1.

⁸⁵ Aronson, "Wannseekonferenz," 1–2.

⁸⁶ Aronson, "Wannseekonferenz," 3.

various participants (Heydrich, Müller, Freisler) with historical photos and film clips of them.⁸⁷ Arguably, this would have broken with Mommertz's desires to keep the film grounded in a specific time and place. Aronson concludes this document by asking what happened to the participants after the conference, suggesting that the filmmakers utilize newsreel footage of Heydrich's state funeral (as they had previously done in *Manager of Terror*), Roland Freisler at the *Volksgerichtshof*, and, yet again, the Grand Mufti of Jerusalem. Aronson suggested that these changes would make the film more documentary-like, but Mommertz indicated his own thoughts on these suggestions by writing "semi" over the phrase "documentary-like."⁸⁸ This is not to say that Mommertz and the production team ignored most of Aronson's suggestions, but that in some instances, particularly where his suggestions would, in their eyes, potentially hamper the film's dramatic potential without adding anything of historical value, they demurred. The script and other production documents make clear that the filmmakers would not be bothered if the audience remained confused at first – because dialogue was so important to the film's impact, they refrained from holding the audience's hand at most points.

A surviving letter to Manfred Korytowski dated April 24, 1983 indicates more of Aronson's suggestions for the script during the writing process. Unlike his more professional correspondence with Mommertz, Aronson addresses Korytowski on a first-name basis. Aronson notes that he has received a new draft of the script with changes Mommertz inserted based on his previous comments. In this letter, Aronson discusses ways to further improve the script, beginning with the disunity of the German population at the time and Hitler's need to bring disparate groups into line, arguing that the film should emphasize that the conference's goal was to make civilian ministries complicit. He also notes that the film should make clear that the Holocaust was a "half-open secret" and suggests that Mommertz utilize an incident with Wilhelm Kube, *Generalkommissar* for White Russia (current-day Belarus), to illustrate this dynamic.⁸⁹ This refers to a dispute between Kube and Heydrich over the killing of Jewish forced laborers, which David Cesarani has dubbed "symptomatic of a wider conflict over policy between civilians and the SS that would flare up repeatedly until the end of [1941]."⁹⁰ Aronson argues that "the purpose of the conference was, among others, to shut down the

⁸⁷ Aronson, "Wannseekonferenz," 3.

⁸⁸ Aronson, "Wannseekonferenz," 3–4.

⁸⁹ Letter from Shlomo Aronson to Manfred Korytowski, April 24, 1983, Private Archive Paul Mommertz, Munich, 1–2.

⁹⁰ Cesarani, *Final Solution*, 397–398.

Kubes and simultaneously make them accomplices.”⁹¹ Aronson takes a strong intentionalist stance here, arguing that “[Hitler] could therefore mobilize people such as antidemocrats, conservatives, conformists, *völkisch* romantics, careerists, and bureaucrats for the Final Solution without them being fanatical antisemites like himself.”⁹² He then notes that the film could then divide the participants along these lines, with Stuckart and Leibbrandt embodying the “antidemocratic conservatives with a sense for bureaucracy,” who “believe in the ‘Führerprinzip’ but fear the NSDAP’s radicalism.”⁹³ Aronson states that Mommertz can then play Stuckart and Leibbrandt off of the SS, using them for a “very dramatic dialectic.” He continues, saying that Alfred Meyer can represent the “*völkisch* romantics,” while Neumann can represent a “conformist.”⁹⁴ For him, “the question that the program seeks to answer should be: why, in fact, did the Stuckarts and Neumanns, Leibbrandts, etc. walk into this trap [of Hitler and the SS]?”⁹⁵ Aronson also wanted the film to emphasize the need for secrecy due to the limited state resources devoted to the “Final Solution” during a total war.⁹⁶ Most importantly, Aronson strongly wished for the script to divide the characters into different, identifiable interest groups and “show a development (such as Stuckart becoming an accomplice).”⁹⁷ He also mentioned photocopies of various sources that he sent with the letter and asked Korytowski to give them to Mommertz.⁹⁸ Further script comments by Aronson remain undiscovered.

The final draft of the screenplay begins with the arrival of Meyer and Leibbrandt. Eichmann addresses them by rank, not name, and the two joke about having a meeting at the “Interpol” villa and that the villa had been recently “Aryanized” – that is, confiscated from its ostensibly Jewish owner.⁹⁹ It is important to note that at the time of filming, historians erroneously believed that the Wannsee villa was also home to Interpol – historians have since determined that this was mistaken, the Wannsee Conference villa was in reality a guesthouse and conference venue for the SD. This oft-repeated mistaken assumption stems from Eichmann’s original invitation letters listing the wrong address.¹⁰⁰ The villa’s previous

91 Aronson to Manfred Korytowski, April 24, 1983, 2.

92 Aronson to Manfred Korytowski, April 24, 1983, 2.

93 Aronson to Manfred Korytowski, April 24, 1983, 2.

94 Aronson to Manfred Korytowski, April 24, 1983, 3.

95 Aronson to Manfred Korytowski, April 24, 1983, 3.

96 Aronson to Manfred Korytowski, April 24, 1983, 3.

97 Aronson to Manfred Korytowski, April 24, 1983, 4.

98 Aronson to Manfred Korytowski, April 24, 1983, 4.

99 Mommertz, *Die Wannseekonferenz*, Drehbuch, 1–3.

100 Tuchel, *Am Grossen Wannsee* 56–58, 114.

owner was not Jewish, but the disgraced industrialist Friedrich Minoux.¹⁰¹ One stage direction that appears early in the script and is almost ever-present is *Heiterkeit*, or laughter or amusement. Conference participants are constantly laughing or drawing amusement from either jokes being told at the Jews' expense or the repressive policies under discussion. One key exception is Heydrich. At several points, the stage directions reiterate that everyone should be laughing besides Heydrich, who is focused on the matter at hand and is concerned above all else with getting through his presentation and forcing the other participants to acquiesce.¹⁰² This is not to characterize Heydrich as a "humorless" person, but rather to show that he was unable to relax until the end of the meeting (he cracks jokes throughout the film, but always steers the conversation back towards the conference's purpose), which is shown at the end of the film – a reference to Eichmann's testimony about Heydrich enjoying a cognac, which Eichmann found very unusual for his superior.¹⁰³ The script describes Heydrich signing paperwork before the meeting, noting his "hasty, effective style . . . Heydrich constantly keeps moving and demonstrates the ability to meet multiple expectations simultaneously."¹⁰⁴ In other words, the script underscores the fact that Heydrich is in control here and that the conference is but one of his many responsibilities.

In contrast, the script highlights Eichmann's nervousness and contradictory attitudes – subservient towards superiors, abusive and hectoring towards subordinates. Eichmann is constantly holding doors open for higher-ranking officials and trying to remain in the background. Early in the script, Eichmann's attitude is described as: "Eichmann is at the gate, telephoning in a high-pitched tone that stands in stark contrast with his keen subservience towards superiors."¹⁰⁵ One key aspect of the script – beyond dialogue – is Mommertz's commentary on particular characters and how the audience should respond. For example, when Stuckart is introduced and he begins discussing issues with *Mischlinge* and the Nuremberg laws, a key conference theme, with the puzzled secretary, Mommertz includes the following note: "One doesn't have to exactly understand Stuckart's remarks, they should instead form the impression of a macabre hairsplitting."¹⁰⁶

In addition to laughter, the script constantly mentions drinking and the loss of inhibitions as the participants consume increasing amounts of cognac during

¹⁰¹ Tuchel, *Am Grossen Wannsee* 56–58, 17–21.

¹⁰² Mommertz, *Die Wannseekonferenz*, Drehbuch, 85.

¹⁰³ Dokument 8, "Adolf Eichmann, Äußerungen in der Sassen-Runde, 1957," Transkript Tonband 50, 6–13, in Kampe and Klein, *Die Wannsee-Konferenz*, 69.

¹⁰⁴ Mommertz, *Die Wannseekonferenz*, Drehbuch, 22.

¹⁰⁵ Mommertz, *Die Wannseekonferenz*, Drehbuch, 16.

¹⁰⁶ Mommertz, *Die Wannseekonferenz*, 10.

the conference – again in keeping with Eichmann’s testimony about the meeting, where he stated “the subject was spoken about in confusion and the orderlies handed out cognac or other drinks all the time, not that any alcoholic effect came about . . .”¹⁰⁷ Drinking and the loss of inhibitions is a key theme of the film, which contrasts the enormity of the criminality on display with the almost party-like atmosphere of the smoke-filled room, the sounds of clinking glasses and men laughing. Rudolf Lange in particular is already tipsy before the meeting even begins, a nod to the *Einsatzgruppen* often being supplied with copious amounts of alcohol.¹⁰⁸ In fact, Lange is so tipsy that he coyly mentions the use of gas vans in occupied Poland during his first scene.¹⁰⁹ The participants constantly drink cognac during the conference, with Heydrich toasting everyone at the end of his presentation – but not drinking any himself until the end of the meeting. During Heydrich’s toast, the script describes an atmosphere that is simultaneously festive, comic, and sinister:

Heydrich raises his glass, but does not drink. He instead demonstratively places it back on the silver tray held out to him. The others toast Heydrich and toss down [their drinks] or sip at them according to their temperament. Kritzinger’s hand shakes a little bit. Bühler chokes a little and coughs. Stuckart only nips suggestively. Luther stretches out his hand for a new glass and tosses down his drink. Lange’s gestures indicate that he’s claiming an entire bottle, and he gets it. He serves himself hereafter completely without inhibition and simultaneously clouded in thick cigarette smoke.¹¹⁰

As the meeting approaches its close and the script reaches its climax, the participants drink even more; the script notes that the ill Stuckart (he has a cold) “drinks distractedly and agitatedly.”¹¹¹

The script makes Mommertz’s use of primary sources abundantly clear. In the *Wannsee Conference* screenplay, the viewer is invited to look at the primary sources on screen – or at least is told about them – and not just the Wannsee Conference Protocol, which is of course the most prominent primary source consulted and directly quoted from in the script. For example, when the script mentions the *Einsatzgruppen* reports sent to the German Foreign Office and Luther’s desk, Mommertz notes that photocopies of the original documents are in his possession: “Lange has taken a manuscript out of the folder, about sixty typewritten

¹⁰⁷ 107. Sitzung am 24. Juli 1961, “Verhör Adolf Eichmanns durch den vorsitzenden Richter Moshe Landau” in Kampe and Klein, *Die Wannsee-Konferenz*, 107–108.

¹⁰⁸ See Edward B. Westermann, *Drunk on Genocide: Alcohol and Mass Murder in Nazi Germany* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2021), 2.

¹⁰⁹ Mommertz, *Die Wannseekonferenz*, Drehbuch, 5.

¹¹⁰ Mommertz, *Die Wannseekonferenz*, Drehbuch, 65.

¹¹¹ Mommertz, *Die Wannseekonferenz*, Drehbuch, 97.

pages long and stapled. (Photocopy of the original in author's possession.)"¹¹² About one-sixth of this document can be found in Mommertz's archived research files on *Einsatzgruppe A*, which was responsible for the Baltic States and which Lange led a part of. These files come from the IfZ, Archiv Fb 101/35.¹¹³ In his commentary on this source collection (most of the folders in the Paul Mommertz Archive contain short, typewritten introductory essays by Mommertz), Mommertz notes that the *Einsatzgruppen* reports were circulated at the highest levels of the German government and that "the amount of readers was in the hundreds, the amount of those who knew about them was in the thousands."¹¹⁴ Mommertz also notes that these *Einsatzgruppen* reports had been circulated "for half a year" before the Wannsee Conference.¹¹⁵

Later in the script, Freisler asks how large *Einsatzgruppen* are and what they consist of. Lange answers, listing the different groups of people within an *Einsatzgruppe*: "Four *Einsatzgruppen* at 1000 men each. Composition: Waffen SS, SS-Reservists, Stapo, Kripo, Orpo, SD. Two dozen female staff . . . Success is based on a combination of organization, the effect of surprise, deception, and an uncompromising will to exterminate."¹¹⁶ Lange's description of the composition of the *Einsatzgruppen* is taken almost verbatim from an organizational chart of *Einsatzgruppe A* found in the IfZ archives and included in Mommertz's collection of photocopied primary documents.¹¹⁷

It is here that the film descends into a meta-level and openly discusses the sources which not only provide evidence for the Holocaust, but also would have been available to many of the conference participants. Throughout the film, characters directly quote or paraphrase sources found in Mommertz's research files. It is important to note that the script itself does not contain footnotes, but in some instances, like the case of the *Einsatzgruppen* reports, it is relatively easy to trace the information contained within a particular line of dialogue back to a source document contained within Mommertz's research files. In this way, the screenplay, correspondence between the filmmakers, Mommertz's photocopied research material, and his accompanying annotations on it all come together to form the

112 Mommertz, *Die Wannseekonferenz*, Drehbuch, 27.

113 Paul Mommertz, "Geheime Reichssache: Einsatzgruppen Bericht der Einsatzgruppe A" in Ordner 2, "Historische Vorarbeit zum Drehbuch," Kapitel 1500 "Dokumente Einsatzgruppen," Bestand Paul Mommertz, Joseph Wulf Bibliothek, Gedenk- und Bildungsstätte Haus der Wannseekonferenz, Berlin, 1.

114 Mommertz, "Geheime Reichssache: Einsatzgruppen Bericht der Einsatzgruppe A," 1.

115 Mommertz, "Geheime Reichssache: Einsatzgruppen Bericht der Einsatzgruppe A," 1.

116 Mommertz, *Die Wannseekonferenz*, Drehbuch, 57.

117 Mommertz, "Geheime Reichssache: Einsatzgruppen Bericht der Einsatzgruppe A," 3.

“paper trail” that allows historians to trace the process of creating a historical film.¹¹⁸

In a page inserted between pages 96 and 97, Mommertz discusses sources and strategies for Stuckart’s arguments about *Mischlinge* and mixed marriages. This is the only instance in the screenplay where Mommertz takes the time to write at length about character decisions. He claims that Stuckart’s arguments resulted in *Mischlinge* and Jews in mixed marriages being spared thanks to the orders of Himmler and possible directions from Hitler himself. At one point, Mommertz states “here too, the script remains in keeping with the verdicts of professional historians.”¹¹⁹ He also offers a word of caution in order to preempt any misunderstandings about Stuckart which could result in mistaken impressions or even identification with the character: “Here too, the impression of Stuckart becoming stylized as a resistance fighter cannot be formed when one looks at his monstrous racist argumentation – even if one grants him a good portion of ‘when in Rome’ . . .”¹²⁰

Other aspects of the screenplay that provide insight into the filmmaker’s ideas and arguments about the Wannsee Conference include instructions for the director and descriptions of nonverbal aspects of the characters’ behavior. This is key for a film depicting group dynamics, power struggles, and rivalries within the Nazi government and across different agencies. These instructions can include details about how characters should react to events nonverbally. For example, during the end of the second part of the script’s second act, “Part B: Luther and the Foreign Jews,” Heydrich exits the conference room with Luther, Müller, Lange, and Eichmann. The script notes “obvious discomfort in the faces of Kritzingner, Stuckart, and Bühler. Indifference from the others.”¹²¹ The seating arrangements at the conference table itself are also a key aspect of the film’s depiction of group dynamics at the Wannsee Conference. When the participants enter the conference room, the SS all sit on one side of the table, forming a wall of gray field uniforms – not the black uniforms seen in *Holocaust*. The script then uses this point to describe the uniforms worn by each character (through three forms of underlining which denote Nazi Party uniforms, SS uniforms, or civilian suits).¹²²

After a period of jockeying for position, with Stuckart awkwardly taking Meyer’s seat and then apologizing for it (as it disrespects Meyer’s seniority), the non-SS attendees shift one seat to the right, which leaves Kritzingner at the end of

118 See Cripps, “Following the Paper Trail.”

119 Mommertz, *Die Wannseekonferenz*, Drehbuch, unnumbered page between pages 96 and 97.

120 Mommertz, *Die Wannseekonferenz*, Drehbuch, unnumbered page between pages 96 and 97.

121 Mommertz, *Die Wannseekonferenz*, Drehbuch, 86.

122 Mommertz, *Die Wannseekonferenz*, Drehbuch, 36.

the table without a seat, both literally and figuratively pushing him away. To solve this problem, Kritzinger sits at one head of the table and the secretary sits at another – close to Eichmann so he can whisper to her during the conference as she writes the protocol.¹²³

The question of seating arrangements is not merely about style – in *The Wannsee Conference*, the seating arrangements illustrate power dynamics. The SS form a unified wall of opinion on one side of the table; in contrast, the ministers and Nazi Party officials form a disunited front. The secretary sits in a more neutral, observational position while Kritzinger is literally pushed into a corner, emphasizing his difficult position at the conference as the representative of the Reich Chancellery.¹²⁴ Representing these power dynamics visually is one of the challenges of depicting a meeting like that at Wannsee on film – this seating arrangements underscores lines of dialogue about institutional and personal rivalries, about the meeting's purpose, and which group is ultimately in control.

Another section of the script describes the scene when groups begin to form during the buffet lunch. The included stage directions reveal more about group dynamics and the moods of individual characters midway through the conference. During lunch, Heydrich “won’t eat, drink, or smoke anything.”¹²⁵ Lange, who has come to Berlin immediately after leading mass shooting actions in Riga “should [perhaps] not eat either, but simply sit there, drinking and smoking and – especially when the discussion concentrates on Stuckart – more or less [appear] bewildered and regularly shake his head.”¹²⁶ The stage directions describe the small cliques forming during the buffet and immediately precede the pages of dialogue taking place at lunch: “The guiding principle is that of course the people with the same uniforms get together first. Klopfer, even in an SS uniform, is obviously on good footing with the Nazi Party Officials Meyer and Leibbrandt. Stuckart with Kritzinger, Luther with Eichmann.”¹²⁷ This section concludes with a description of the general atmosphere during the meeting’s buffet lunch which emphasizes the uncanny, fundamental contradiction at the heart of the Wannsee Conference: “There are concerned, but also amused faces that do not fit at all with what has just been discussed – one’s thoughts are sometimes elsewhere . . . and through that, an unnerving drama arises from the inappropriate flippancy and superficiality.”¹²⁸ *The Wannsee Conference* is deeply concerned with depicting

123 Mommertz, *Die Wannseekonferenz*, Drehbuch, 36–38.

124 Roseman, *The Wannsee Conference*, 93–95.

125 Mommertz, *Die Wannseekonferenz*, Drehbuch, 72.

126 Mommertz, *Die Wannseekonferenz*, Drehbuch, 73.

127 Mommertz, *Die Wannseekonferenz*, Drehbuch, 72.

128 Mommertz, *Die Wannseekonferenz*, Drehbuch, 73.

the fundamental contrast between the enormity of the crime and the banality of the meeting, which is further underscored by the absolutely callous manner in which the participants discuss, joke, and laugh about the Jews and what has been happening – and will happen – to them. These are not cartoon villains laughing like psychopathic maniacs, but rather boring, middle-aged bureaucrats telling lame jokes to each other about the most infamous crime in history. They try to make it seem harmless while it is still happening, while through their euphemistic language and Eichmann's efforts with the protocol, they deny its reality while it is still taking place.

4 Character Profiles

Before filming began, Mommertz developed character profiles for the cast and production team. These profiles are, depending on the character, between one and seven pages long and sometimes include photocopies of primary sources related to the historical figures. It is important to note that in contrast with the initial pitch document draft, which argues for vague, composite characters, these character profiles describe the historical persons, not invented composites. In an introduction to the profiles written to help archivists and researchers, Mommertz states that “[these characterizations] do not claim to be factual in all of the smallest details, the thought behind them was for basic orientation for the director and actors.”¹²⁹ He claims that “they played a central role in the realization of the film” and that “without them, the approach to the event we had striven for would not have been reached.”¹³⁰ A degree of invention is present in these character profiles, as Mommertz includes personality traits for the characters that are not always based in historical accounts – Lange's alcoholism is most notable here. Nevertheless, the profiles are quite candid when it comes to invention – they clearly show when certain character traits are fictionalized or when certain figures portray more composite characters – especially when a particular character served to represent the more general positions of his ministry or office.

The characters belonging to the SS (this includes all SD and RSHA functionaries) have profiles of varying levels of detail. This group is comprised of Heydrich, Eichmann, Müller, Hofmann, Schöngarth, and Lange. Although Stuckart and Klop-

¹²⁹ Paul Mommertz, “Wannseekonferenz – Charakterisierung der Teilnehmer” in Ordner 2, “Historische Vorarbeit zum Drehbuch,” Kapitel 1700 “Charakterisierung der Teilnehmer (Ausfertigung für Regie und Schauspieler),” Bestand Paul Mommertz, Joseph Wulf Bibliothek, Gedenk- und Bildungsstätte Haus der Wannsee-Konferenz, Berlin, 1.

¹³⁰ Mommertz, “Wannseekonferenz – Charakterisierung der Teilnehmer,” 1.

fer also held rank in the SS, for the purposes of clarity, they are grouped with the characters representing the civilian ministries and the Nazi Party, respectively. Heydrich's character profile mentions Mommertz and Schirk's previous work on *Manager of Terror*, and because Dietrich Mattausch reprised his role in this film, this profile likely contains information gleaned from research on the earlier project.¹³¹ Mommertz has also stated that the characterization of Heydrich in *The Wannsee Conference* is the same as in his earlier film.¹³² The profile mentions the rumors about Heydrich's supposed Jewish ancestry – and acknowledges they were false – and also alludes to Heydrich's possession of “additional drive through actual or alleged deficits,” which harkens back to the “psychogram” of Heydrich in *Manager of Terror*.¹³³ The script itself does not contain such statements about Heydrich's psyche and its influence on his behavior, but this document – again, primarily meant for Dietrich Mattausch – is more about preparing an actor for a role than exploring the various methods of historiography. In a longer passage, Mommertz describes Heydrich's appearance in general:

Heydrich, the young, handsome, blond god of death, as he was characterized, functioned as sharp as a knife in his sphere of influence, super intelligent, always wide-awake, like a wound-up spring. The impression of the dangerous, competent, deliberative was not diminished by his high, thin voice (Bismarck!), but was rather forgotten, it wasn't heard anymore.¹³⁴

Another passage further describes how Heydrich should behave at the meeting:

His authority was based on, above all else, power, reputation, terror, and protection from the Führer and Reichsführer [Himmler]. Whereby it has to be said: Even Heydrich may appear a bit overstrained. Everything is a tad excessive: friendly condescension like a sharp edge; the display of his direct line to Führer headquarters and the Reichsführer-SS, as well as his casual observations: Gruppenführer suffices . . . a person whose dangerousness arises from his inconsistency.¹³⁵

These passages characterize Heydrich as an imposing, dangerous figure who overplayed his strengths in order to compensate for perceived inadequacies, thereby continuing roughly the same characterization found in *Manager of Ter-*

131 Paul Mommertz, “Heydrich” in Ordner 2, “Historische Vorarbeit zum Drehbuch,” Kapitel 1700 “Charakterisierung der Teilnehmer (Ausfertigung für Regie und Schauspieler),” Bestand Paul Mommertz, Joseph Wulf Bibliothek, Gedenk- und Bildungsstätte Haus der Wannsee-Konferenz, Berlin, 1.

132 Interview with Paul Mommertz, March 14, 2019, 16:18–18:53.

133 Mommertz, “Heydrich,” 1.

134 Mommertz, “Heydrich,” 1.

135 Mommertz, “Heydrich,” 3.

ror. Here, in contrast, the character profile for Eichmann, played by Gerd Böckmann, is relatively bare-bones, with Mommertz's only commentary noting that his personality and role is spelled out clearly in the script.¹³⁶ Instead, he included photocopies of secondary sources about Eichmann, most notably Albert Wucher's 1961 book *Eichmanns gab es viele*. One of the included scans from Wucher describes Eichmann as an awkward yet ambitious man, which he "compensated with his brash manner"¹³⁷ The character profile of Gestapo head Heinrich Müller (Friedrich Beckhaus) is similarly spartan and only includes a statement alleging that "little was known about him" and a photocopy of relevant passages from Eichmann's memoirs (which describe Müller as a "sphinx") and Shlomo Aronson's *Reinhard Heydrich und die Frühgeschichte von Gestapo und SD*.¹³⁸ Otto Hofmann (Robert Atzorn) receives a character profile which is more substantial, with Mommertz characterizing the head of the SS Race and Settlement Main Office (RuSHA) as the "picture book German par excellence," but also as a man with a "tangible coldness and lack of feeling."¹³⁹ The profile concludes by summing up Hofmann as "basically a dumb, smug, indoctrinated specialist and *Fachidiot*," a derogatory term for a person only interested in their area of specialization.¹⁴⁰

The last two characters representing the SS are Schöngarth and Lange, those who were directly involved in *Einsatzgruppen* actions and early extermination camps. Schöngarth's (Gerd Rigauer) profile underscores his brutality and his status as what the Nazis cynically referred to as "bearers of secrets" (*Geheimnisträger*): "Schöngarth appears secretive, cautious, masklike. Spooky."¹⁴¹ These character profiles also note relationships between characters; for example, Schöngarth's profile

136 Paul Mommertz, "Eichmann" in Ordner 2, "Historische Vorarbeit zum Drehbuch," Kapitel 1700 "Charakterisierung der Teilnehmer (Ausfertigung für Regie und Schauspieler)," Bestand Paul Mommertz, Joseph Wulf Bibliothek, Gedenk- und Bildungsstätte Haus der Wannsee-Konferenz, Berlin, 1.

137 Mommertz, "Eichmann," 3.

138 Paul Mommertz, "Müller" in Ordner 2, "Historische Vorarbeit zum Drehbuch," Kapitel 1700 "Charakterisierung der Teilnehmer (Ausfertigung für Regie und Schauspieler)," Bestand Paul Mommertz, Joseph Wulf Bibliothek, Gedenk- und Bildungsstätte Haus der Wannsee-Konferenz, Berlin, 1–2.

139 Mommertz, "Wannseekonferenz – Charakterisierung der Teilnehmer," 1.

140 Paul Mommertz, "Hofmann" in Ordner 2, "Historische Vorarbeit zum Drehbuch," Kapitel 1700 "Charakterisierung der Teilnehmer (Ausfertigung für Regie und Schauspieler)," Bestand Paul Mommertz, Joseph Wulf Bibliothek, Gedenk- und Bildungsstätte Haus der Wannsee-Konferenz, Berlin, 1.

141 Paul Mommertz, "Schöngarth" in Ordner 2, "Historische Vorarbeit zum Drehbuch," Kapitel 1700 "Charakterisierung der Teilnehmer (Ausfertigung für Regie und Schauspieler)," Bestand Paul Mommertz, Joseph Wulf Bibliothek, Gedenk- und Bildungsstätte Haus der Wannsee-Konferenz, Berlin, 1.

notes that as an SS officer active in the General Government, he would have likely met Bühler before, since Bühler was Hans Frank's deputy.¹⁴² Lange's (Martin Lüttge) character profile notes that members of the *Einsatzgruppen* often drank heavily and claims that in Berlin, such men were often indulged. It notes that Lange should exhibit "insensitivity" towards the civilians at the conference and that the SS "loved to shock" such people. Mommertz justifies Lange's drunkenness in the film by speculating that "internally, they could perhaps have not let Lange get away with so much drinking – but if it was suitable to throw off the gentlemen civil servants from the ministries, then please. This is left unsaid behind the scenes."¹⁴³ It is in this section where the character profiles, which alternate between purely biographical information, descriptions of appearance, and the beliefs of the various participants move more into the realm of speculation – which is always present in historical film to a certain degree but appears glaring in a film like this one, which takes pains to avoid it more than most. Here, Lange's alcoholism is used to illustrate both the stress of mass shooting operations on *Einsatzgruppen* personnel – one of the key justifications for the switch to gassing – and as an example of the acting-out of interinstitutional rivalries. According to this document, by instrumentalizing Lange's (fictional) alcoholism, the SS in the film can shock and distract the middle-class, proper bureaucrats who are used to a higher level of decorum. The presence of Lange's German shepherd in the film also underscores this unspoken strategy.

The second group of characters profiled here are those representing the interests of the Nazi Party: Leibbrandt, Meyer, and Klopfer. The profile written for Leibbrandt (Jochen Busse) contains a detailed description of how Nazi Party members routinely behaved at conferences (they "didn't play by the rules") which is used as a justification for their more boorish behavior in the film.¹⁴⁴ Here, Leibbrandt and Meyer (Harald Dietl) function more as composite characters standing in for a more "proletarian" attitude which served to set apart the representatives of the Nazi Party from the more buttoned-up civilian *Staatsekretäre* or the SS members, with their pretensions of military bearing. Mommertz describes

¹⁴² Mommertz, "Schöngarth," 1.

¹⁴³ Paul Mommertz, "Lange" in Ordner 2, "Historische Vorarbeit zum Drehbuch," Kapitel 1700 "Charakterisierung der Teilnehmer (Ausfertigung für Regie und Schauspieler)," Bestand Paul Mommertz, Joseph Wulf Bibliothek, Gedenk- und Bildungsstätte Haus der Wannsee-Konferenz, Berlin, 2–3.

¹⁴⁴ Paul Mommertz, "Leibbrandt" in Ordner 2, "Historische Vorarbeit zum Drehbuch," Kapitel 1700 "Charakterisierung der Teilnehmer (Ausfertigung für Regie und Schauspieler)," Bestand Paul Mommertz, Joseph Wulf Bibliothek, Gedenk- und Bildungsstätte Haus der Wannsee-Konferenz, Berlin, 2.

Nazi Party representatives' behavior at previous conferences as "affected behavior that they intentionally cultivated in order to teach the representatives of the older order the meaning of fear."¹⁴⁵ It is from these characters that most of the film's jokes and other examples of callous, arrogant attitudes stem. Mommertz describes the Nazi Party representatives' behavior in detail, portraying Leibbrandt as a boorish, unmannered simpleton:

Leibbrandt, as well as Meyer, should stand out through their markedly informal behavior. [Leibbrandt] sucks his bonbons during the entire conference, he loudly unwraps them and is constantly offering them to the whole table in an annoying manner.¹⁴⁶

Mommertz characterizes Meyer in a similar fashion. Also a Nazi Party representative, Meyer demands Stuckart's chair (directly opposite Heydrich) at the start of the conference. Mommertz uses this awkward encounter to show high-ranking Nazi Party members' (he uses the term "golden pheasants," a pejorative for Nazi Party bosses at the time) penchant for "exaggerating questions of their own prestige, rank, and status."¹⁴⁷ Mommertz uses the characters of Leibbrandt and Meyer much in the same way Loring Mandel uses his version of Klopfer to depict Nazi Party officials as literally growing fat off of the war effort: "Meyer corresponds to the well-fed Nazi Party fat cats on the home front, who lunges at the buffet and does not stop eating until the end of the conference and is also unafraid of speaking with a full mouth. He is loud, choleric, incredibly arrogant."¹⁴⁸ Klopfer's (Günter Spörrle) profile states that although he wears an SS uniform, Meyer and Leibbrandt are his "people" and that he is "actually in the Party members' squad."¹⁴⁹ This characterization stands in opposition to the visual decisions to place every character with an SS uniform (besides Stuckart) on the same side of the table. The profile notes that Klopfer "knows no inhibitions when it comes to [measures] against Jews or half-Jews. Everything about him is fanatical zeal."¹⁵⁰ Nevertheless, in contrast with Ian McNeice's corpulent yet scheming portrayal of

145 Mommertz, "Leibbrandt," 2.

146 Mommertz, "Leibbrandt," 2.

147 Paul Mommertz, "Meyer" in Ordner 2, "Historische Vorarbeit zum Drehbuch," Kapitel 1700 "Charakterisierung der Teilnehmer (Ausfertigung für Regie und Schauspieler)," Bestand Paul Mommertz, Joseph Wulf Bibliothek, Gedenk- und Bildungsstätte Haus der Wannsee-Konferenz, Berlin, 1.

148 Mommertz, "Meyer," 2.

149 Paul Mommertz, "Klopfer" in Ordner 2, "Historische Vorarbeit zum Drehbuch," Kapitel 1700 "Charakterisierung der Teilnehmer (Ausfertigung für Regie und Schauspieler)," Bestand Paul Mommertz, Joseph Wulf Bibliothek, Gedenk- und Bildungsstätte Haus der Wannsee-Konferenz, Berlin, 1.

150 Mommertz, "Klopfer," 1.

Klopfer in *Conspiracy*, this version of Klopfer leaves that behavior up to Leibbrandt and Meyer.

The final group of participants are the representatives of civilian governmental ministries. This group consists of *Staatsekretäre* and *Unterstaatsekretäre* (with the exception of Kritzinger): Stuckart, Kritzinger, Luther, Bühler, Neumann, and Freisler. The most important of these characters are Stuckart, Luther, and Kritzinger, with the others playing supporting roles. Stuckart (Peter Fitz) has the most extensive character profile, containing seven pages of commentary. The profile describes Stuckart as “an up-and-comer with the correct party membership” and continually emphasizes Stuckart’s credentials as a jurist and Nazi ideologue.¹⁵¹ Mommertz’s characterization of Stuckart argues that although he was responsible for “half-Jews and Jews in mixed marriages” being spared, he did so for “practical and political reasons” – Mommertz does not downplay Stuckart’s antisemitism and complicity, noting that Stuckart perjured himself at Nuremberg.¹⁵² Mommertz does note that some of Stuckart’s dialogue in the script originated with his protégé at the Interior Ministry, Bernhard Lösener, and that this practice makes his version of Stuckart partially a composite character “representing the spirit” of the Interior Ministry.¹⁵³ Most of this character profile describes Stuckart’s biography and motivations at the conference. At the end of the profile, Mommertz summarizes the character and historical figure of Stuckart:

Stuckart was a National Socialist antisemite, even with his education and his position in the civil administration, he was for ‘drastic measures’ . . . evidently, entrapping people like him more deeply into responsibility was one of the purposes of the Wannsee Conference. Stuckart is superior to all other conference participants when it comes to seniority, expertise, and experience, especially the Party representatives. He is therefore assigned a certain authority, which permits him to move a bit more outside of the given boundaries than an outsider unaware of the actual circumstances in the Third Reich’s governmental system would assume.¹⁵⁴

Mommertz does allow himself more invention with Stuckart’s character by portraying him as ill during the conference. This invention was intended to make viewers aware of Stuckart’s diminished influence and position at the conference: “In order to accommodate the viewer – who it is not easy to make things clear

151 Paul Mommertz, “Stuckart” in Ordner 2, “Historische Vorarbeit zum Drehbuch,” Kapitel 1700 “Charakterisierung der Teilnehmer (Ausfertigung für Regie und Schauspieler),” Bestand Paul Mommertz, Joseph Wulf Bibliothek, Gedenk- und Bildungsstätte Haus der Wannsee-Konferenz, Berlin, 3.

152 Mommertz, “Stuckart,” 4–6.

153 Mommertz, “Stuckart,” 6.

154 Mommertz, “Stuckart,” 6–7.

to – within the television play framework, Stuckart is shown with a heavy cold – whoever could find his “boastful” behavior unbelievable may be more likely to ascribe Stuckart’s “breaking character” to his feverish flu.¹⁵⁵ Similarly to *Conspiracy*, it is clear that the filmmakers had the hardest time with Stuckart’s character, as his motivations are less obvious to viewers; depicting him having reservations about mixed marriages and the full extent of the mass murder campaign runs the risk of inattentive viewers believing that he is a type of resistance fighter within the regime – a character with whom they can identify. Reviewers would later criticize *The Wannsee Conference* on this point, but production documents and script make it clear that Stuckart was not meant to be a sympathetic, identifiable character – just because he is not as extreme as Heydrich, it does not mean that he is not a fanatical antisemite. After all, Stuckart was a key figure in the drafting and implementation of the Nuremberg Laws.¹⁵⁶ Nevertheless, some of the language in production documents about Stuckart – and the character’s own claims at the end of the film about wanting to quit the Interior Ministry to serve at the front – move towards apologetics.

The profile assigned to Luther (Hans-Werner Bussinger) is much less extensive than Stuckart’s, its first page is missing and the rest of the document is made up of quoted and photocopied sources which emphasize Luther’s role as Heydrich’s man in the Foreign Office.¹⁵⁷ In contrast, the character study on Kritzinger (Franz Rudnick), representative of the Reich Chancellery and “pushed into a corner” at the conference as described above, is more extensive. As he was the oldest conference participant and represented an “outmoded” institution, Kritzinger is described as “old-fashioned,” this was to be made apparent by his clothing as well.¹⁵⁸ The profile describes Kritzinger’s behavior at Wannsee as that of a pedantic, confused, and aging bureaucrat in the old style:

155 Mommertz, “Stuckart,” 7.

156 Saul Friedländer, *Nazi Germany and the Jews: Volume 1: The Years of Persecution 1933–1939* (New York: HarperCollins, 1997), 152.

157 Paul Mommertz, “Luther” in Ordner 2, “Historische Vorarbeit zum Drehbuch,” Kapitel 1700 “Charakterisierung der Teilnehmer (Ausfertigung für Regie und Schauspieler),” Bestand Paul Mommertz, Joseph Wulf Bibliothek, Gedenk- und Bildungsstätte Haus der Wannsee-Konferenz, Berlin, 2.

158 Paul Mommertz, “Kritzinger” in Ordner 2, “Historische Vorarbeit zum Drehbuch,” Kapitel 1700 “Charakterisierung der Teilnehmer (Ausfertigung für Regie und Schauspieler),” Bestand Paul Mommertz, Joseph Wulf Bibliothek, Gedenk- und Bildungsstätte Haus der Wannsee-Konferenz, Berlin, 1.

The typecast representative of the Reich Chancellery ought to attract attention through somewhat strained meticulousness. He has arranged files, notebooks, and appointment calendars in front of him. He takes notes with his fountain pen, but also with an assortment of colorful pens. He wears thick glasses, is nearsighted, squints, does not seem to hear well either, often puts his hand to his ear. One can see it clearly, everything must have its correctness and accuracy, and then one has to be able to give a lecture to Mr. Meissner, his superior, and perhaps even to the Führer and Chancellor of the Reich. Certainly a man with the necessary qualifications, also with the right attitude towards the state, but all in all a little overtaxed. And old-fashioned.¹⁵⁹

This quote further underscores how the filmmakers wished to present Kritzinger and the Reich Chancellery's presence at the conference. Kritzinger "represented the shrinking group of bureaucrats who still embodied something of an earlier civil service ethos" and the film is about the SS alternately convincing or steam-rolling civilian ministries into acquiescence.¹⁶⁰

Mommertz describes Josef Bühler (Reinhard Glemnitz), Hans Frank's subordinate, as "a kind of silent eminence" who represents the interests of the General Government. In the film, he was supposed to serve as a "witness of Frank's notorious anti-Semitic outbursts and as the apparent administrative executor of adopted measures which range from the AB action (eradication of Polish intelligentsia) to the allocation of Jews for the extermination camps."¹⁶¹ The document notes that Bühler's interests coincide with Neumann's, as they are both deeply involved in wartime production and therefore questions of forced labor. It also notes that Bühler has a "strained relationship" with the Nazi Party and the SS due to questions of who exactly holds authority over Jews in the General Government.¹⁶² The document describes Bühler's appearance as "Dry, awkward, humorless. No special characteristics. He has a dry way of coughing, as if he had to blow the dust out of his insides. Correct dark suit, white pocket square, Nazi Party badge."¹⁶³

Erich Neumann (Dieter Groest), *Staatssekretär* for the Four Year Plan and deputy of Hermann Göring, is described as already knowing "most of the gentlemen" from other conferences, but that not much is known about his biography

¹⁵⁹ Mommertz, "Kritzinger," 1.

¹⁶⁰ Roseman, *The Wannsee Conference*, 93.

¹⁶¹ Paul Mommertz, "Bühler" in Ordner 2, "Historische Vorarbeit zum Drehbuch," Kapitel 1700 "Charakterisierung der Teilnehmer (Ausfertigung für Regie und Schauspieler)," Bestand Paul Mommertz, Joseph Wulf Bibliothek, Gedenk- und Bildungsstätte Haus der Wannsee-Konferenz, Berlin, 1.

¹⁶² Mommertz, "Bühler," 2.

¹⁶³ Mommertz, "Bühler," 2.

which could help form a better impression of his character.¹⁶⁴ Mommertz notes that “at the conference, [Neumann] is only interested in the Jews as armament industry workers – they must be excluded from the extermination measures.”¹⁶⁵ Since Mommertz had not found much biographical information on Neumann, he used his character to exemplify a type of person present at most types of administrative meetings. According to this document, Neumann “should look very bored and only wake up briefly when the question of the labor force arises. He often looks at the clock and is clearly tormented when another point of discussion is raised. By the way, he doodles whole pages full of ‘stick figures.’”¹⁶⁶ Here, Neumann functions to illustrate the conference’s banality, thereby underscoring the incongruence of its atmosphere with its subject.

Roland Freisler (Rainer Steffen), the most notorious Conference attendee after Heydrich and Eichmann thanks to his tenure as head judge of the *Volksgerichtshof*, attended the conference as representative of the Ministry of Justice. Mommertz describes Freisler as “on the one hand a fanatical National Socialist . . . on the other hand a correct civil servant.”¹⁶⁷ He also places Freisler “on the same wavelength” as his fellow regime lawyers Bühler, Stuckart, and Kritzinger.¹⁶⁸ His character profile engages in some of the psychohistorical speculation seen in Heydrich’s characterization:

He can be very nervous and thus representative for a certain faction: On the one hand, he is in favor of taking sharp action in the sense of the Führer’s policy, the correctness of which must be beyond doubt; on the other hand, however, he is also an academically educated bourgeois son who cannot possibly cope without problems with an extermination program involving eleven million men, women and children. – Even in the show trials, he gives the psychologist the impression, I am told, of a fundamentally overburdened man who shouts beyond his fear and the voice of his conscience – it is precisely those fundamentally insecure [sic] people who were suitable for ‘unreasonable’ tasks, because they were most mercifully subjected to the political and psychological pressure of proof. This was exploited. I would show Freisler as an extremely nervous chain-smoker, with a certain slightly exagger-

164 Paul Mommertz, “Neumann” in Ordner 2, “Historische Vorarbeit zum Drehbuch,” Kapitel 1700 “Charakterisierung der Teilnehmer (Ausfertigung für Regie und Schauspieler),” Bestand Paul Mommertz, Joseph Wulf Bibliothek, Gedenk- und Bildungsstätte Haus der Wannsee-Konferenz, Berlin, 1.

165 Mommertz, “Neumann,” 1.

166 Mommertz, “Neumann,” 1.

167 Paul Mommertz, “Freisler” in Ordner 2, “Historische Vorarbeit zum Drehbuch,” Kapitel 1700 “Charakterisierung der Teilnehmer (Ausfertigung für Regie und Schauspieler),” Bestand Paul Mommertz, Joseph Wulf Bibliothek, Gedenk- und Bildungsstätte Haus der Wannsee-Konferenz, Berlin, 1.

168 Mommertz, “Freisler,” 2.

ated assiduousness in voice, facial expressions and gestures. If he is observed, he gives himself a jolt, so to speak. Restless, sharply observing eyes.¹⁶⁹

In keeping with earlier, now obsolete historiographical depictions of Nazi perpetrators, Mommertz seeks an explanation for Freisler's behavior in a psychological disorder. It is here and in his profile of Heydrich that traces of Armand Mergen's work on *Manager of Terror* can be observed. Thankfully, such statements are absent from the film itself, but it is still important to note the psychohistorical origins of some of the characterizations. The character profiles provide a key window into how Mommertz envisioned the three groups of conference participants and where he added speculative personality quirks to certain characters. In some cases, such as Eichmann's, we can also see the exact historical source consulted to construct his character's personality. With others, such as Freisler, Kritzinger, and Stuckart, we can see how Mommertz used invented personality traits to explore wider questions about the Nazi government and the people who ran it – their physical or mental weaknesses in the film function as ways to show the weaknesses of the agencies and systems they represented and were part of. This is not to say that Mommertz argues that these ministers had no choice but to submit to Heydrich, but rather to say that he was able to exploit a fundamental weakness in Nazi governmental structure and use it to his advantage, thereby making the entire regime complicit in the Holocaust.

Little documentation from the production period has survived. Exterior shots were filmed at the Wannsee villa itself, but because the villa was not yet a memorial site and was still in use as a hostel for Neukölln schoolchildren, only exterior shots were filmed in West Berlin. The film was shot in January and February of 1984. The production company constructed interiors at Bayerischer Rundfunk's studios in the Munich district of Oberföhring.¹⁷⁰ Schirk has noted that the most difficult aspect of filming was getting the “axes” right, that is making sure the directions actors were looking in remained consistent throughout filming. To get around this problem, Schirk ended up drawing noses on the script in order to show him which directions each character should be looking at in each shot.¹⁷¹ Mommertz stated that he encouraged Schirk to film the proceedings with a tempo “like in an American comedy” and that it was better when characters spoke quickly, because

From the very beginning I had the idea that if people don't have to understand it at all, then it's better if [the characters] talk fast, then they appear more competent. They are specialists, they are experts. They talk fast. This is a businesslike tone and it prevents you from

¹⁶⁹ Mommertz, “Freisler,” 1–2.

¹⁷⁰ Interview with Paul Mommertz, October 19, 2019, Part 1, 26:45–29:40.

¹⁷¹ Interview with Heinz Schirk, April 5, 2019, 37:54–40:09.

falling asleep. You get carried away again and again and I thought: “I can bring a moment of tension into this.” . . . I said “it’s like an American comedy.”¹⁷²

After a fourteen-month research process and a delayed production, *The Wannsee Conference*, a co-production of ORF (the Austrian public broadcaster) and Bayerischer Rundfunk (BR), aired on ARD on December 19, 1984 at 8:15 pm.

172 Interview with Paul Mommertz, October 19, 2019, Part 1, 15:23–16:59.