

Adolf Eichmann's Testimony in Jerusalem about the Wannsee Conference

(English transcript of the Eichmann trial [mimeographed], June 23, 1961, session 78, pp. ZI, Aal, Bbl; June 26, 1961, session 79, p. Bl; July 24, 1961, session 107, pp. El, Fl, Gl., Dr. Robert Servatius was Eichmann's German attorney.)

Dr. Servatius: ... Will the witness explain what do you know in connection to the initiative to call this conference?

Accused: Without any doubt, the main reason for the convening of the conference was Heydrich's intention to extend the scope of his influence.

Dr. Servatius: Was he afraid of any difficulties? Did he have reason to be afraid?

Accused: Experience up to then showed that all those questions were usually dealt with by various authorities and if it were, there was no coordinated activity and, therefore, actions were delayed considerably as there were all sorts of activities carried out within various offices. And, in a nutshell, one may point out that in the deliberations which were held so far they wouldn't see the wood for the trees, and they wouldn't arrive at any definite solution or any coordinated solution. This is one of the reasons why Heydrich convened the Wannsee Conference, why he actually convened it on his own initiative in order to imprint his own will and that of the Reichsführer SS.

Dr. Servatius: The witness I believe already declared here in Court that you prepared Heydrich's speech. Or this may be collected from the appendix to the Sassen report.

Presiding Judge: Yes.

Dr. Servatius: Are you ready to repeat once again your explanation how it came about that you were asked to prepare this speech?

Accused: Yes. I was instructed to collect material which Heydrich thought relevant for his speech which he was about to hold. That means to say that it should have been a general survey of all the operations that had been carried out in the course of the last years in the realm of the emigration of Jews. It had to be a survey of the results and the difficulties of the operations in question. These prepared remarks that I drew for Heydrich's speech can be seen on the seven pages of the document in front of us, but it struck me that certain points which I prepared were [not] prepared by me. They are not the fruit of my pencil, so to speak, but simply expressed by Heydrich without taking heed of what I had prepared. Because very often as I had seen from experience he would speak very freely, without always taking care of the prepared points. And here on page 6 the last passage, according to which Jews were earmarked for special labor effort and they were to be sent, within the framework of the final solution, to the eastern territories and, as I said, this was to conform with the framework set for the labor effort in the east. The labor columns were to be formed and a separation was to be carried out between the sexes so that the Jews fit for work would be brought within the framework of this plan and would be employed in the construction of the roads. This particular passage could not have possibly stemmed from me and the remarks couldn't possibly been ascribed to what I wrote because this particular passage actually constituted a turning point in the policy towards the Jews and this policy appears for the first time in the Wannsee Conference.

Presiding Judge: I believe there is a written translation into the Hebrew of this document.

Court Interpreter: I do not have it before me.

Accused: May I further point out, your Honors, to complete the picture, that the second function which was bestowed upon me was the function of keeping minutes of the meeting together with a secretary.

Accused: These minutes to which I was referring were rendering the salient points quite clearly. But so far as the particulars were concerned, I have to point out that this was not a verbatim report because certain colloquialisms were then couched by me in official language and certain official terms had to be introduced. Later on it had been revised three or four times by Heydrich. It came back through official channels to us through the channel of Mueller and then again we had to elaborate on it until it assumed its final form.

Dr. Servatius: What is not reflected in the protocol is the spirit which reigned at this conference. Can you report or comment regarding the spirit and attitude at this conference?

Accused: Yes, the climate of this conference was characterized as it were by a relaxed attitude of Heydrich who had actually more than anybody else expected considerable stumbling blocks and difficulties.

Q: It is important how these things found expression on the part of the other participants.

A: It was an atmosphere not only of agreement on the part of the participants, but more than that, one could feel an agreement which had assumed a form which had not been expected. Unflinching in his determination to participate fully in the functions with regard to the final solution of the Jewish problem and particularly outstanding in the enthusiastic and unexpected form of agreement was the State secretary, Buehler, and even more than Buehler, Stuckart had evinced boundless enthusiasm. He was usually hesitating, and reserved, reticent and furtive, but all of a sudden he gave expression to boundless enthusiasm, with which he joined the others with regard to the final solution of the Jewish question.

Q: The witness saw before the calling of this conference the preparations in the East for the extermination? He saw the steps taken there?

A: Yes, Sir.

Q: Did the participants at this conference know anything about the way for the final solution?

A: I have to assume that the things were known to the participants of the Wannsee Conference because after all the war against Russia had been going on already about six months. As we saw in some various relevant documents, the operational groups were already acting in the Russian war theater and all those key personalities in the Reich Government must have known about the state of affairs at that time.

Q: How long did this conference go on and what happened after the conference was over?

A: The conference itself took only a very short period of time. I can't recall exactly how long it lasted, but it seems to me that I would not be mistaken in saying that it didn't take longer than an hour or an hour and a half. Of course, the gentlemen who participated in it would later on be standing in small groups to discuss the ins and outs of the agenda and also of certain work to be undertaken afterwards. After the conference had been adjourned, Heydrich and Mueller still remained and I was also permitted to remain and then in this restricted get-together, Heydrich gave expression to his great satisfaction I already referred to before....

Presiding Judge: ... Now in connection with the Wannsee conference, you answered my colleague Dr. Raveh that this part of the meeting, which is not mentioned in the protocol, the discussion was about means of extermination. Systems of killing.

A: Yes.

Q: Who discussed this subject?

A: I do not remember it in detail, Your Honor. I do not remember the circumstances of this conversation. But I do know that these gentlemen were standing together, or sitting together, and were discussing the subject quite bluntly, quite differently from the language which I had to use later in the record. During the conversation they minced no words about it at all. I might say furthermore, Your Honor, that I would not have remembered this unless I had later remembered that I told myself, Look here, I told myself, even this guy Stuckart, who was known as one of these uncles who was a great stickler for legalities, he too uses language which is not at all in accordance with paragraphs of the law. This incident remained engraved in my memory and recalled the entire subject to my mind.

Q: What did he say about this subject?

A: In detail I do not

Q: Not details in general, what did he say about this theme?

A: I cannot remember it in detail, Your Honor, but they spoke about methods for killing, about liquidation, about extermination. I was busy with my records. I had to make the preparations for taking down the minutes; I could not perk up my ears and listen to everything that was said. But it filtered through the small room and I caught fragments of this conversation. It was a small room so from time to time I heard a word or two.

Q: I believed that this was the official part of the meeting, of the conference.

A: The official part did not take too long.

Q: Was this in the official part of the conference, or not? It was my belief that this was in the official conference because this should have been included in the protocol of the meeting, although nothing is mentioned.

A: Well of course, it was in the official part, Your Honor. But again this official part had two subdivisions. The first part where everyone was quiet and listened to the various lectures, and then in the second part, everyone spoke out of turn and people would go around, butlers, adjutants, and would give out liquor. Well, I don't want to say that there was an atmosphere of drunkenness there. It was an official atmosphere, but nevertheless it was not one of these stiff, formal, official affairs where everyone spoke in turn. But people just talked at cross vertices.

Q: And were these also recorded by the short-hand typists?

Accused: Yes, yes they were taken down.

Presiding Judge: And you were ordered by someone not to include it in the memorandum of the meeting in the official Protocol of this meeting, weren't you?

Accused: Yes, that's how it was. The stenographer was sitting next to me and I was to see to it that everything would be taken down; then she deciphered this and then Heydrich gave me his instructions as to what should be included in the record and what should be excluded. Then I showed it to Heydrich and he polished it up and proof-read it and that's how it was kept.

Q: And that which was said about this very important theme, you cannot remember at all is this what you say?

A: Well, the most important thing here was...

Q: I did not say, the most important I said it was an important theme, and important enough to be excluded from the record.

A: Well, no. The significant part, from Heydrich's point-of-view, was to nail down the Secretaries of State, to commit them most bindingly, to catch them by their words; and therefore, it was quite the contrary the important part did go into the record and the less significant ones were excluded. It was, I would say, that Heydrich wanted to cover himself, wanted to be sure that each and every one of these Secretaries of State would be nailed-down and these matters, therefore, were put down.

Q: That means to say that the methods of killing the systems of extermination was not an important theme?

A: Ah! the means of killing....

Q: That is what we are speaking about the means of killing.

A: No, no this of course was not put into the record no, no!

Q: Did they discuss killing by poison gas?

A: No, with gas no.

Q: But, how then?

A: It was ... this business with the engine, they spoke about this; they spoke about shooting, but not about gas. Later, the Protocol goes on to say, in the same passage, that Gauleiter Meyer and Secretary of State Dr. Buehler (?) believed and were of the opinion, that certain preparations, for implementation in various districts, be made at the same time; certain preparatory work in connection with the "final solution" should be made immediately, in the discussed areas, but unrest amongst the population should be avoided.

Q: Can you remember this?

A: What did you mean, Your Honor; I did not understand it.

Q: You did not understand? All right I will read it out to you once again: Dr. Meyer and Dr. Buehler that their opinion was that preparatory work should begin immediately for the "final solution" in the various areas, but at the same time to avoid unrest and anxiety on the part of the population.

A: Ah, yes...

Q: To which preparatory work does this refer?

A: I cannot imagine anything, but...

Q: Don't imagine! My question is and I put it to you, as the Attorney-General put it to you before and all the time what can you remember? This was a turning point, in fact.

A: I was there and I witnessed the preparatory work, with these two little houses in the Lublin area.

Q: Which two little huts in the Lublin area? I'm asking you this question about the Conference.

A: Well, I had seen the preparatory work before in fact, but I don't really know. They spoke about the matter, at the meeting, of not creating any anxiety and perplexity amongst the local population, so all I thought was being discussed, was this same kind of business.

Q: And did you report what you saw to this Conference?

A: At the Wannsee Conference? No, I never uttered a syllable; I was not authorized to open my mouth. No, I had no permission.

Q: So, who was it, who brought the technical details to the Conference?

A: Well, no one discussed the technical details. That is to say, Heydrich opened the meeting and then everyone spoke about it. Well, I mean maybe Buller [Buehler] spoke about it or possibly Krueger. I suppose he would have; he was the senior SS and Police Commander in the Government General. In a way he was the head of the entire business, in charge of it. Globocnik was subordinated to this man Krueger. Krueger, as the boss, must have known it in detail.

Presiding Judge: But Krueger did not take part at the Wannsee Conference, according to the list of participants.

A: Yes, but earlier he visited Heydrich and extracted from him an invitation for Buller [Buhler] to take part at the meeting. And then, one spoke about it in detail. Heydrich and Krueger discussed it and for that reason I had to issue special invitations for Krueger and Mueller [Buehler].

Q: You told the Court that you do not consider yourself an anti-Semite and that you never were an anti-Semite.

A: An anti-Semite I never was. No.
