

Institute of National Remembrance

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The 80th anniversary of the Wannsee Conference

On 20 January 1942, at the Wannsee Conference, the most disgraceful decisions in the history of mankind were made. High-ranking German officials made arrangements that resulted in the involvement of the entire state apparatus in the murdering of Jews.







The policymakers named the arrangements euphemistically as the implementation of the "final solution to the Jewish question".

They did not even want to admit to themselves that it was a genocide, a planned extermination of the Jewish people carried out by the German state. The whole procedure was to be organized by Reinhard Heydrich, head of the Reichssicherheitshauptamt [Reich Security Main Office].

On the territories under the German jurisdiction, Jews were subjected to harassment, repression and persecution for several years. Those who had emigrated before the Hitler's seizure of power of 30 January 1933, could consider themselves lucky. The following years brought progressive repressions — the expulsion from their homes, life in ghettos and finally — transfer to concentration camps. From June 1941, the Wehrmacht units were followed by the Einsatzgruppen, which dealt with the physical extermination of Jews.

These actions, however, did not meet the expectations of Adolf Hitler and Heinrich Himmler, who demanded an acceleration of the extermination process of the Jewish people.

The fate of Jews was doomed before the Wannsee Conference, but it was the time when German state made a commitment to murder all citizens of Jewish descent from Germany as well as from other European countries. The bureaucratic machine was launched, the order was planned, the locations of the camps were determined, and the plan to plunder the property of the

murdered was made. The victims were to die quickly and generate profit from stealing Jewish properties to Germany.

The extermination of 11,000,000 Jews who lived in Europe was included in the German plans. The genocide began from the lands of the General Government (the occupied part of Poland), from where 1,850,000 Jews — Polish citizens — were sent to extermination camps under the "Einsatz Reinhardt" plan. By the end of World War II, the German extermination apparatus had murdered approximately 2,900,000 Polish citizens of Jewish origin, who constituted the largest group among the total of 5,500,000 murdered Jews. The remaining victims came from all other countries occupied by the Germans.

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