

Lernen aus der Geschichte e.V.

<http://www.lernen-aus-der-geschichte.de>

**Der folgende Text ist auf dem Webportal
<http://www.lernen-aus-der-geschichte.de> veröffentlicht.**

Das mehrsprachige Webportal publiziert fortlaufend Informationen zur historisch-politischen Bildung in Schulen, Gedenkstätten und anderen Einrichtungen zur Geschichte des 20. Jahrhunderts. Schwerpunkte bilden der Nationalsozialismus, der Zweite Weltkrieg sowie die Folgegeschichte in den Ländern Europas bis zu den politischen Umbrüchen 1989.

Dabei nimmt es Bildungsangebote in den Fokus, die einen Gegenwartsbezug der Geschichte herausstellen und bietet einen Erfahrungsaustausch über historisch-politische Bildung in Europa an.

House of the Wannsee Conference

History of the Building

The villa on the Wannsee was built in 1914-15 by the industrialist Ernst Marlier. In 1921 he sold it to Friedrich Minoux, who at the time was general director of the Stinnes Trust. In 1940 the villa was acquired by the SS "Nordhav" Foundation and was used as a guest house for visiting police and SS officers. From 1943 the *Reichssicherheitshauptamt* [Reich Central Security Office] used it as a "*Kameradschafts- und Führerheim*" ["Center for Cameraderie and Leaders"] for the Gestapo.

In 1945 the building was occupied first by Soviet naval personnel and then by American officers. In 1947 the August-Bebel-Institut established a community college here. From 1952 to 1988, it served as a school vacation home for Berlin's Neukölln district.

Thanks to the historian Joseph Wulf, the villa's role in the Wannsee Conference entered the public consciousness. In 1965, Wulf proposed establishing an "International Documentation Center for Research on National Socialism and its Consequences" at this site.

Wulf's plans met with the approval of prominent supporters. Nahum Goldmann, president of the World Jewish Congress, offered significant financial support for the documentation center at the

historical site. The Berlin Senate offered another building. In the end, however, all negotiations broke down. The association for the documentation center was dissolved in 1972. Late in 1986, the Berlin Senate announced that it would establish a memorial to be opened to the public in January 1992, on the 50th anniversary of the Wannsee Conference.

History as Learning Site

The House of the Wannsee Conference reaches out with an array of pedagogical approaches to students of all kinds — to pupils, to young people in occupational training, to teachers and educators as well as to adults in political and occupational continuing education.

On this site, one must examine to what extent the National Socialist politics of genocide were rooted in specifically German traditions. This question addresses the ideological antecedents, systematic planning, and the execution of mass murder as an administrative process, inexorably carried out with technical and bureaucratic perfection by the entire state apparatus and a host of accomplices who, in some cases, were overeager to act in advance of their orders.

History is not only a recording of political events. All sectors of society have a past which is relevant. Almost every occupational group and every institution took some part in the discrimination and exclusion of the Jews, whose lives were written off as "*Ballastexistenzen*" [undesirable encumbrances]. Thus, most of all, we must ask how and why the municipal and state administrations functioned with so few hindrances in the preparation, planning, and execution of the Nazi genocide.

In seminars concentrating on specific occupations, it is possible for trainees and professionals from varied institutions and public services, e.g., from the judicial system, municipal finance, health, and social administration, as well as the military, the police force, and the economic, scientific, and cultural worlds, to examine documents and trade journals from the National Socialist era in order to see how their own occupational groups were involved at that time in executing the "Final Solution." Although we live today in a constitutional democratic state under different political conditions, the question of whether our modes of thought and behavior have outgrown the tendency to turn human beings into mere objects to be managed remains relevant.

The assimilation of history should be oriented toward the level of knowledge, the interests, and the

needs of those being addressed by means of the ways questions are posed and the forms of work. At the Memorial, dealing with history is understood to be an active process. The most important methods are discussions, group work, and exploration of autonomous learning by means of documents; these are complemented by practical and creative forms of work as well as Gestaltpedagogical exercises, which enhance and deepen the individual's perceptive abilities.

A team of scholars and educators offers groups advice and help in planning and implementing seminars. The team also organizes sessions with the partners concerned, prepares lectures and work materials, moderates discussion groups, and assists in working with documents.

Offer to Schools and Extracurricular Educational Organizations

The Memorial offers guided tours through the permanent exhibit as well as escorting school visits. It assists in the preparation preceding and following study tours to Israel and Poland and of multiple-day seminars. These may be combined with excursions to local sites of Jewish history and those of persecution and resistance in Berlin during the National Socialist era. The staff of the educational department also offer assistance with the planning and preparation of conferences, international meetings, tours to memorial sites, and longer-term projects.

A topic from National Socialist history or Jewish history can be worked on and discussed in a oneday seminar or more intensively in a multiple-day project. Participants can also explore the following thematic topics more deeply through participating in discussion groups, analyzing documents and films, and product-oriented work:

-Judaism and Jewish life in Europe before 1933

-Jews under National Socialist rule

-Historical and ideological antecedents and the National Socialist dictatorship

-Planning and organization of genocide

-The aftermath of the National Socialist dictatorship on politics and society since 1945

-The impact of National Socialist crimes on survivors and their descendants

-Discussion of the National Socialist dictatorship and its crimes in present-day Germany

-Continuities

In addition, workshops are offered on the methodology of Gestalt pedagogy and theme centered interaction.

Because the Memorial cannot offer on-site overnight accommodations, multiple-day seminars are organized in cooperation with other educational institutions which can provide them. Written advance notice for tours, student days, and seminars is recommended.

The Media Center

Educational work is augmented with the help of a media center. The media center consists of a reference library, a collection of documents on microfilm and microfiche, and an audiovisual collection.

In addition to pedagogical literature and reference books, the library contains testimonials from witnesses, memoirs, and other sources such as periodicals, research literature, and literature dealing with the topics of European Jewish history, anti-Semitism, persecution, genocide, National Socialism, racism, and neo-Nazism.

Above all, the media center serves the discovery of learning for the seminar participants. Books and other sources of information, however, are also intended for the on-site use of all visitors of the Memorial. Seminar groups and individual visitors may obtain assistance in compiling materials and bibliographies by theme.

Reservations

Timely advance notice by telephone or in writing is recommended for tours, student days, and seminars.

House of the Wannsee-Conference Memorial and Educational Site Am Grossen Wannsee 56-58
Hours: D-14109 Berlin Monday to Friday 10.00 am - 6.00 pm Telephone: (0049 30) 805 001-0, 35
Saturday, Sunday 2.00 pm - 6.00 pm Telefax: (0049 30) 805 001-27 **e-mail** WannseeEdu @
compuserve.com **Home Page** <http://ourworld.compuserve.com/homepages/WannseeAdmin>

Public transportation:

S-Bahn station "Wannsee", bus 114 to House of the Wannsee Conference

Exhibition:

The Wannsee Conference and the Genocide of the European Jews Admission free.
Guided tours by appointment only, except Mondays

Educational Department:

Workshops and seminars by appointment only.

Media Center:

Reference library, videotape collection, audiovisual archives Monday to
Friday 10.00 am - 6.00 pm