The Holocaust and Fundamental Rights.
Case studies for reflections on the work of officials

Haus der Wannsee-Konferenz - Gedenk- und Bildungsstätte

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Transcript of Wolf Kaiser: Hitler in "Mein Kampf" on "human rights"

In this presentation I will explore the role of fundamental-rights violations in the process of the establishment of Nazi dictatorship in Germany. The emergence of the dictatorship was a process driven by political decisions and legislative measures, but also by massive violence. With the establishment of a full-fledged dictatorship, no political organisation or societal institution remained in Germany that was willing and able to prevent the regime from committing genocide and crimes against humanity.

Focusing on fundamental-rights violations in the first phase of the Nazi rule, I will not try to give a comprehensive overview and deal with all steps in this process. I'd like to mention, however, that the Nazi leaders were not the only ones who bear the blame. All those who voted for Hitler or supported his ambitions in different ways could know what kind of regime they could expect. Let me just mention one example that is relevant in our context: Hitler referred to the discourse on human rights in the second part of his book "My Struggle" (first published in 1926). He mentioned them in the context of his polemics against so-called "racial defilement" and the alleged decline through "bastardization", demanding that the "Germanic states" should strictly prohibit the "mixture of races". Hitler wrote:

"The generation of our present notorious weaklings will obviously cry out against this, and moan and complain about assaults on the holiest human rights. No, there is only one holiest human right, and this right is at the same time the holiest obligation, to wit: to see to it that the blood is preserved pure and, by preserving the best humanity, to create the possibility of a nobler development of these beings."

Hitler understood very well that his ideology, Nazi racism as expressed in these lines, is the very opposite to the belief in the intrinsic value of every human individual, in equality before the law and in non-discrimination.