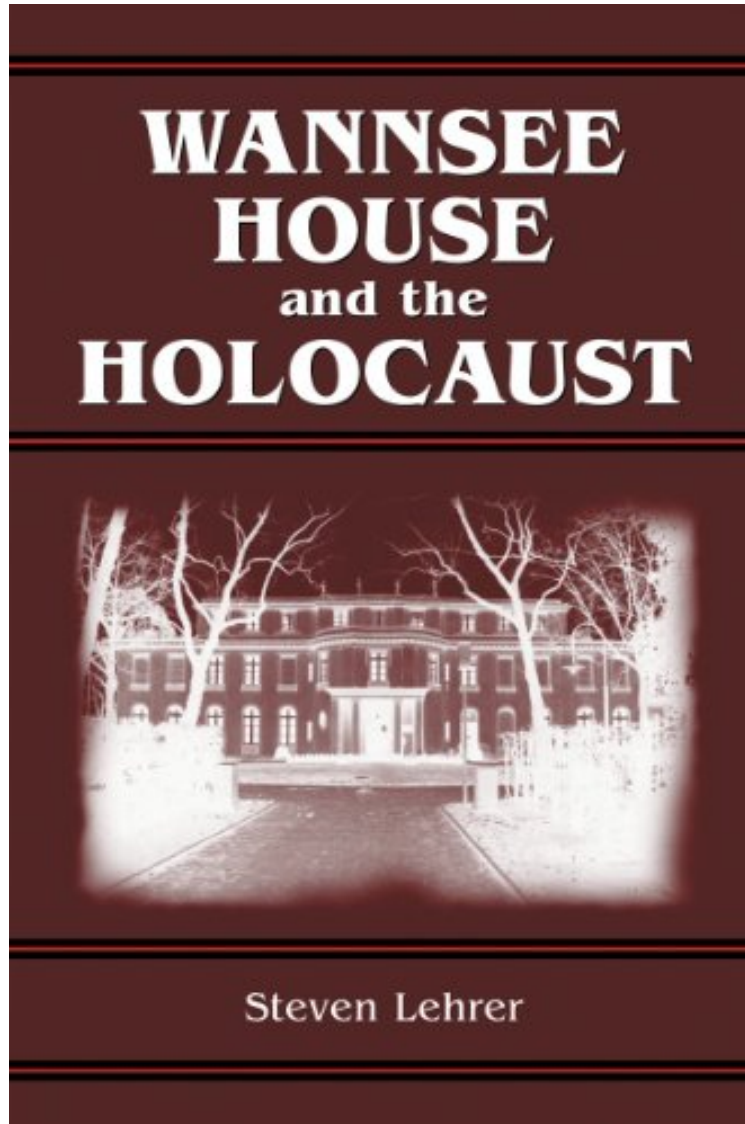


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## Wannsee House and the Holocaust

*Steven Lehrer*

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**Steven Lehrer : Wannsee House and the Holocaust** before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Wannsee House and the Holocaust:

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. DisappointmentBy Thomas M. MageeI found this book a bit of a disappointment. I purchased the book looking for details about what occurred there at the Wannsee House. This was where the speeches of Hitler was translated into a bureaucratic campaign to kill on a massive scale. This was where the Nazi's gathered representatives from across their government to build their killing machine. This is from a

"civilized" nation to. The book only gives that meeting a brief review. It goes off on this tangent or that tangent about the Holocaust. These other stories are interesting but they detract. The author does have some interesting information in the annex. That information made the three stars for me. I did find it ironic that a Jew made zyclon B, the gas that the German's killed the Jews and others with. I really think the subject needs more research. It shows how morals is important. Our education won't save us. That is what the German's had in the Wannsee conference and look what it created. 2 of 4 people found the following review helpful. The Wannsee Villa and the Many Whose Fate is Involved By Dr. Victor S. Alpher This book about Wannsee is a welcome surprise. It begins in the 1800s, with the financial machinations of those who would ultimately build it, the skullduggery of at least one man who inhabited it (and paid the ultimate price), this appears to be a conglomeration of writings by the author...and cleverly assembled into a single tale of people, their frailties, and the Jewish home that became the ultimate scene of the so-called Wannsee Conference (20 Jan 1942) where the Final Solution was announced by SS-Obergruppenführer Reinhard Heydrich to others of the government functionaries, the Old Guard, and senior officials of the Wehrmacht. While others have focused on that event, this book provides an illuminating context (written by a man named Lehrer, "teacher" in German, ironically). Any individual interested in the Holocaust, the development of the Third Reich from the decimation of Germany following the Treaty of Versailles, will find deep earth to uncover in this beguiling and deceptively short volume. Most highly recommended! 0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Haunted house By Harry Eagar In "Wannsee House and the Holocaust," Steven Lehrer takes an unusual - some might even think odd - approach to the extermination of the Jews, a social history of the Nazi policy. We have plenty of political, ideological or bureaucratic versions. Perhaps putting it in homely perspective will offer some insights. The home at the focus was enormous, a 15,000-square-foot villa on a lake in the suburbs of Berlin. Lehrer, using almost entirely German sources, writes discursively, the way social historians tend to do, although this slender volume does not lay it on as thick as in most social histories. One of the temptations of 21st century styles in social history comes from noting the unlikely coincidence; social histories, at least of elites, are about small worlds. This was true of the German Jew-haters. It is odd, if not significant, that three of the "owners" of the Wannsee mansion died violently. In the early '20s, Friedrich Minoux used his home to try to organize a dictatorship to overthrow the Weimar republic. A businessman and crook, he ended up in a concentration camp. The next owner, effectively though not legally, "Hangman" Heydrich, used the building for the conference that is often said to have "started" the extermination campaign. As Lehrer emphasizes, the extermination campaign had already begun. The "Wannsee Conference" in January 1942 was meant to make it more effective, which it did. In the '50s, a Holocaust survivor, Joseph Wulf, campaigned to make the house into an archive and museum and research center on murder. Never a legal owner of the house, he staked a moral claim to its disposition. Germany was not prepared for that then, and in despair Wulf defenestrated himself. From the '80s, though, Wulf's plan has been realized. In a hundred pages (the rest of the book reproduces translated documents of the Nazi program), Lehrer cannot go into great depth, but he does a more than merely adequate job of looking at the whole sweep of the crime, from the origins of antisemitism, and the influence of Martin Luther, to the role of the Roman Catholics and Pope Pius XII. His judgment of the church and the pope is harsh, although not nearly harsh enough. He leaves open the question of what practical effect it would have had if Pacelli had spoken out against the killings. Lehrer tends to agree with those who think it would have created a crisis for Hitler and even have saved millions of lives. That is an undecidable proposition, and there are those who say it would have made things worse, although it is hard to imagine how. What is undeniable is that there would have been a political cost to the Vatican. What is also undeniable is that Pacelli could have intervened with the Croats (who accomplished 5% of the Holocaust, with far less than 5% of the resources the Germans devoted to it), and he could have done it at no political cost. He could have done it for the price of a postage stamp. Given Lehrer's idiosyncratic approach, it is a mere cavil to point out all the things that are not in the book, except for one: Although he mentions, several times, that the murders started not with Jews but with the mentally or physically disabled; he never mentions that once the Wannsee apparatus got rolling, it was not only Jews who were killed. Jews were the obsession, but Gypsies, homosexuals, commissars, even - ironically, enough - Catholic priests were murdered en masse, too.

Although Hitler's extermination of the Jews was well under way by the end of 1941, it was at the Wannsee Conference of January 1942 that Reinhard Heydrich officially announced the Nazi party's pursuit of the infamous "final solution." This conference was held at a luxurious villa known as the Wannsee House, and both the house and the conference have a complicated and fascinating history, which unfolded as economic and political events drew together wealthy German businessmen and powerful political figures in sometimes surprising ways. This book traces that history from 1914-the year that saw the foundations laid for both the house and the Holocaust-to the present. Appendices provide a wealth of historical documents including the Reich's rules "defining" Jews, letters from Reich Security Service officials providing early documentary evidence of the Holocaust, and a transcript of Adolf Eichmann's 1961 court testimony regarding the Wannsee Conference.

"good information...uses a variety of sources...a good addition"--Stone Stone Second World War Books; "numerous

photographs"--Reference Research Book News; "organized as a series of tightly written vignettes...ensures that Wannsee will not be forgotten"--Hadassah Magazine. About the Author Steven Lehrer is an associate professor at Mount Sinai School of Medicine. Also the author of *The Reich Chancellery and Führerbunker Complex* (2005) and *Hitler Sites* (2002), he lives in New York City.