

## **Jewish Labour in Nazi Ghettos**

A conference of the German Historical Institute Warsaw  
in cooperation with the Jewish Historical Institute Warsaw,  
3 to 4 December 2010

The Nazi policy of expansion and extermination cost six million Jewish lives during World War Two, extinguished in a systematic genocide. But before the mass murder started, the European Jewry was locked in more than 1.100 ghettos in Eastern Europe; the intention was to cut them off their surroundings and to facilitate control. These ghettos should be self-sufficient and not be any burden to the German administration – but on the contrary be cost-effective. As new research has shown, this demand was partially met by the comprehensive payment of ghetto workers by means of money and foodstuffs.

Of course this payment was neither adequate nor sufficient, but it helped the Jews to survive. Historical evidence in the context of restitution according to the so-called ghetto-pension law (ZRBG) also has shown that most labour was carried out under general circumstances of coercion, but started out of one's own decision. As at least some individual latitude of ghetto life remained, the image of a monolithic reign of terror has to be differentiated, hitherto conceptualisations of historians denominating all kinds of work more or less as “forced labour” are to be nuanced. Coercion and restraint do describe the general ghetto conditions, but by no means they are a selective, explanatory category.

The conference, organized jointly by the Deutsches Historisches Institut (DHI) and the Żydowski Instytut Historyczny (ŻIH), both in Warsaw, will in an interdisciplinary approach gather results from dealing with “ghetto pensions”. The participants will review the conditions of ghetto labour and economy and want to increase the still fragile state of research concerning ghettos. The conference examines for instance:

- the relationship of economic calculus and Nazi ideology,
- the contribution of ghettos to German occupation and war economics,
- the different intentions of local institutions towards “their” Jews,
- questions of labour motivation, the various forms of work and its organisation (from the Jewish perspective),
- the relevance of “voluntary” aspects for the Jewish living and / or persecution narratives, but also for the self-justification of the German occupants,
- collective and individual survival strategies in the face of looting and deprivation.

The conference will be held at Deutsches Historisches Institut / Niemiecki Instytut Historyczny, al. Ujazdowskie 39, 00-540 Warszawa.

A travel scholarship for Ph.D. students is available.

## **Friday, 3 December (9 a.m.)**

### Reception

*Prof. Dr. Eduard Mühle (DHI); Dr. Eleonora Bergman (ŽIH)*

### Panel I: Preliminaries and conditions (9:30-11 a.m.)

#### 1. Introduction

*Dr. Jürgen Hensel, ŽIH Warszawa; Dr. Stephan Lehnstaedt, DHI Warschau*

#### 2. Recruitment and employment of Jewish labour in occupied Poland and Lithuania during World War One

*Dr. des. Christian Westerhoff, Landesbibliothek Berlin*

#### 3. HSSPF Krüger and Jewish work in General Government 1940 - a question of authority

*Dr. Jacek A. Młynarczyk, Muzeum Historii Polski*

### Panel II: Ghetto Labour in North Eastern Europe (11:15 a.m.-1:30 p.m.)

*Chair: PD Dr. Ruth Leiserowitz, DHI Warschau*

#### 1. Jewish labour self administration on the example of Krakow and Warsaw

*Imke Hansen M.A., Universität Hamburg*

#### 2. Max Bischof and the „Transferstelle Warschau“

*Giles Bennett M.A., Institut für Zeitgeschichte München-Berlin*

#### 3. Theresienstadt: A ghetto archetype with archetypal work?

*Dr. Peter Klein, Hamburger Stiftung zur Förderung von Wissenschaft und Kultur*

#### 4. Occupation aims in the Soviet Union and Jewish work in Lithuania

*Dr. Joachim Tauber, Nordost-Institut Lüneburg*

### Panel III: Ghetto Labour in South Eastern Europe (3-5:30 p.m.)

*Chair: Dr. Andrea Löw, Institut für Zeitgeschichte München-Berlin*

#### 1. Ukrainian Jews under civil and military administration

*Prof. Dr. Frank Golczewski, Universität Hamburg*

#### 2. No longer the forgotten cemetery? - Considerations on ghetto labour and labour assignment measures in Transnistria

*Dr. Andrej Angrick, Hamburger Stiftung zur Förderung von Wissenschaft und Kultur*

#### 3. Labour as an alternative to unemployment? Daily life in Hungarian ghettos, 1944

*Mag. Regina Fritz, Universität Wien*

## **Saturday, 4 December (9 a.m.)**

### Panel IV: Places of Jewish Labour (9:15-12 a.m.)

*Chair: Dr. Katrin Stoll, DHI Warschau*

1. German companies in the ghettos  
*Dr. Jürgen Hensel, ŻIH Warszawa*
2. Wehrmacht and „Arbeitsjuden“  
*Dr. Jochen Böhler, DHI Warschau*
3. Jewish forced labour camps. Work outside the ghettos, 1940-1942  
*Dr. Marta Janczewska, Centrum Badań nad Zagładą Żydów, IFiS-PAN Warszawa*
4. Ghettos as labour camps, 1942/43  
*Dr. Alina Skibińska, Centrum Badań nad Zagładą Żydów, IFiS-PAN Warszawa*

### Panel V: Macroeconomic Aspects of Jewish Labour (1:30-3 p.m.)

*Chair: Dr. Martin Dean, US Holocaust Memorial Museum, Washington [invited]*

1. How does a ghetto survive? Work, money and food  
*Dr. Witold Mędykowski, Hebrew University, Jerusalem*
2. The contribution of ghetto labour for Nazi economics  
*Dr. Ingo Loose, Humboldt-Universität Berlin*
3. Administration and SS. Conflicting interests in anti-Jewish policy?  
*Dr. Stephan Lehnstaedt, DHI Warschau*

### Panel VI: Aftermath and results (3:15-5:30 p.m.)

1. Ghetto pensions and historical research - interdisciplinary perspectives  
*Dr. Jan-Robert von Renesse, Landessozialgericht Nordrhein-Westfalen; Dr. Jürgen Zarusky, Institut für Zeitgeschichte München-Berlin*
2. Conclusion and final discussion  
*Dr. Jürgen Hensel, ŻIH Warszawa; Stephan Lehnstaedt, DHI Warschau*

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