

SIXTH JUNIOR SCHOLARS CONFERENCE IN JEWISH HISTORY: RADICALISM AND RESISTANCE IN MODERN JEWISH HISTORY

Sixth conference in the “Junior Scholars Conference in Jewish History” series, organized by the Institute for the History of the German Jews, Hamburg (IGdJ), the Wissenschaftliche Arbeitsgemeinschaft of the Leo Baeck Institute in Germany, and the German Historical Institute Washington (GHI), held September 24–25, 2019 at the IGdJ in Hamburg. Conveners: Miriam Rürup (IGdJ, Hamburg), Anna-Carolin Augustin (GHI), Mirjam Zadoff (NS-Dokumentationszentrum München), Anne Schenderlein (GHI). Participants: Anna-Carolin Augustin (GHI), Lukas Böckmann (Institute for Jewish History and Culture — Simon Dubnow, Leipzig), Andreas Brämer (IGdJ), Noémie Duhaut (Leibniz Institute of European History, Mainz), Eszter Susan Guerrero (New York University), Zoë Grumberg (Science Po, Paris), Sarah Johnson (UCLA), Vera Kallenberg (University of California Santa Cruz), Tom Navon (University of Haifa), Meghan Riley (Indiana University), Miriam Rürup (IGdJ), Jan Rybak (European University Institute, Florence), Björn Siegel (IGdJ), Sari J. Siegel (Cedar’s-Sinai Medical Center), Ynon Wygoda (Hebrew University, Jerusalem), Mirjam Zadoff (NS-Dokumentationszentrum).

This biannual workshop brings together recent PhDs as well as those in the final stages of their dissertations. The aim of each workshop is to bring together a small transatlantic group of junior scholars to explore new research and questions in nineteenth- and twentieth-century Jewish history, contextualized with research on people from other backgrounds. Over the course of two days the participants give short presentations of their individual research projects and engage in discussions on sources, methodology, and theory in order to assess current and future trends in the modern history of Jews around the world.

The Sixth Junior Scholars Conference in Jewish History focused on resistance and radicalism in Modern Jewish history. The conference highlighted how certain aspects of the socio-economic, educational, cultural and religious backgrounds coming from individuals who employed different forms of resistance were perceived throughout Jewish communities. All papers and discussions addressed the questions when and why Jews decided to turn to radical attitudes towards

politics, society, religion, and culture. They asked how some became activists for different political and social positions and in which contexts their opposition turned into various forms of resistance. Key questions of the conference were: What circumstances and events have triggered radicalism and stirred up various forms of resistance among Jews? What measures have people employed to resist and when did they become radical or perceived as such?

The first panel of the conference, titled “Religion, Community, and Radicalism,” was chaired by Miriam Rürup. In her contribution “An Oral History of the Jews in the Alternative Public Sphere in Hungary,” Eszter Susan Guerrero described her research on Hungarian Jews’ relationships to the socialist regime, focusing on those who criticized the Communist Party’s policies and acted upon this conviction. Working with oral history interviews, Guerrero drew attention to the experiences of secular Hungarian Jews during the socialist era. In particular, her research focused on those who were on the fringes or outside of the Jewish organizational networks and expressed resistance in an “alternative public sphere.”

Jan Rybak pointed out in his paper “‘The Red Flag on Mount Moriah’: Revolution, Anti-Jewish Violence, and Socialist-Zionism in East-Central Europe, 1918–1920” that different local conditions in which socialist-Zionist Poale Zion activists found themselves after the First World War were decisive for the later conflict and split of the World Union of Poale Zion in 1920. While the Zionist perspective put an emphasis on the role of Jews as victims in need of a national movement, the Poale Zionists wanted to make a strong case for the power of individual agency within a human rights oriented-movement rather than a merely Jewish and Zionist agenda.

The question of agency and Jewish diplomacy was again addressed in Noémie Duhaut’s paper “19th-century French Jewish International Advocacy and its Links to European Radical Movements” during the second panel on “Revolution and Radicalism.” Duhaut presented a case study on the Alliance Israelite Universelle’s political fight for civic and political equality on behalf of Balkan Jews. According to Duhaut, the Alliance’s advocacy was shaped by the radical ideas of the 1848 revolution and built upon partnerships with radicals. Zoë Grumberg’s presentation, “Between political Radicalism and Resistance: Yiddish-speaking Jewish communists in France, 1930–1950s,” dealt with biographies of young Jews from Eastern Europe in the interwar period, their becoming communists and being part of the

resistance in France, and the overarching debate about the meaning of the Jewish communists' identity as Jews. References to the relationship between communism and "Jewishness" came up again in several subsequent papers.

The third panel, chaired by Anna-Carolin Augustin and titled "Resistance and Radical Historiography," put Vera Kallenberg's paper "Becoming a radical pioneer of women's history: The intertwining of Jewish experience, feminist historiography, art, and leftist activism in the life and work of Gerda Lerner (1920–2013)," in conversation with Tom Navon's paper titled "Radical Historiography as a Form of Jewish Resistance during the 1930s: The Case of Otto Heller". Kallenberg presented her approach to the biography of Gerda Lerner. Lerner was an anti-fascist Jewish refugee from Vienna who emigrated to the U.S. and became a radical leftist activist, feminist author, American-Jewish historian, public intellectual, and pioneer of women's history who included an intersectional approach in her work. Tom Navon focused in his paper on another almost forgotten radical Jewish historian — Otto Heller — and a largely overlooked part of Jewish history: Marxist Jewish history. Both biographical cases discussed the relationship between leftist activism, socialism, communism and "Jewishness."

Jewish resistance during the Holocaust and the Second World War was the focus of the fourth panel, titled "Resistance & Humanitarianism under Nazi Rule" and chaired by Andreas Brämer. In her paper, "Humanitarianism as Resistance and Resistance as Humanitarianism: The JOINT and HIAS in the French Internment Camp System During the Holocaust," Meghan Riley undertook a study on how the work of Jewish American aid organizations (JOINT/HIAS) can be discussed as acts of resistance, such as if the JOINT ignored Vichy laws as part of its humanitarian mandate. Sari Siegel's paper "Jewish Prisoner-Physicians and the Coercion-Resistance Spectrum Approach" addressed power imbalances and the possible conduct of resistance, analyzing the critical role of these Jewish prisoner-physicians in Nazi camps.

During the fifth panel, "Resistance, Pseudo-Resistance, and Defense," chaired by Björn Siegel, Sarah Johnson presented her paper "Defending Jewish Germans: The Centralverein deutscher Staatsbürger jüdischen Glaubens and its fight against Zionism in the Weimar Republic." Johnson focused on the CV's shift from an *Abwehrverein* (defense organization) to that of a *Gesinnungsverein* (an

association based on shared ideological convictions). She emphasized that the CV's fight against both antisemitism and Zionism was part of a larger attempt to adapt changing political and social structures in Germany and safeguard German-Jewish assimilation in a period defined by frequent instability and widespread antisemitism. Ynon Wygoda devoted his contribution, "'Our time does not seem to lack a dictionary:' On Resistance and Pseudo-Resistance within the 'Republic of Silence' (1940-1944)," to a discussion within the French literary and philosophical world during and after World War II, which questioned the definition of resistance and activism in times of war. Based on the analysis of Vercors' *The Silence of the Sea* published in 1942 and Jean Paul Sartre's *The Republic of Silence* that was published in the final issue of the underground journal *Les lettres françaises* two weeks after the liberation, Wygoda drew attention to the debate about and reception of the idea of defining silence as an active and engaged gesture rather than a cowardly regress or an equivocal non-action.

Anna-Carolin Augustin (GHI) and Miriam Rürup (IGdJ)