



Workshop: The short- and long-term economic effects of German exploitation in occupied countries during World War II

Call for Papers

In spite of the importance of World War II for German and European history, some important economic questions have still not been fully answered. For instance, we do not know the extent of the exploitation of occupied Europe – and hence the contribution of Europe to Nazi Germany's war effort – in real numbers. There also is only fragmentary information on how Germany used the financial levies it imposed on occupied countries. And, above all, we do not know exactly what short- and long-term economic effects the German occupation had on different countries.

The planned workshop will consider the economic consequences of German occupation policies from a variety of perspectives. First, we want to compare the immediate economic effects of German occupation during the war. While German policies surely had many negative effects upon the occupied nations, we want to consider also possible short-term economic benefits, for example reductions in unemployment.

Secondly, the long-term effects of the occupation will be examined. After the war, for example, how did occupied countries handle the inflation of their currencies caused by German occupation policies? What welfare losses can be attributed to this inflation? What economic and social problems did formerly occupied countries experience in reintegrating onetime forced laborers upon their return home from Germany?

The long-term economic effects of German occupation might not all have been negative, however. For example, many infrastructure projects were carried out during the German occupation. Did these new roads, railways or bridges contribute toward the economic integration of the formerly occupied countries? We know that during World War II German and foreign industrial companies often cooperated in production for German purposes. It seems that the quantities of goods produced for the Germans were larger than previously assumed. Germany's import structure changed dramatically during the war: Germany became primarily an importer of manufactured goods. The structure of wartime imports, in other words, was more similar to that of West Germany in the 1950s than to the Weimar Republic's. This raises the question whether West German and foreign companies in Western Europe re-activated contacts and networks established during the war, especially given the often high continuity in firms' personnel from the war years into the 1950s. And these networks in turn could have fostered the economic integration of West Europe from the 1950s on. The more or less forced cooperation be-

tween German and foreign companies during the war seems at least in some cases to have been accompanied by knowledge transfer from Germany to firms in occupied countries. Did foreign firms benefit from this knowledge and technology after the war? The Germans implemented or at least spurred institutional reforms in some occupied countries in order to exploit them more efficiently – such as reforms of the tax system to contain the inflationary tendencies generated by the huge German excess demand. In the case of these reforms the question is whether some of these reforms “survived” the German occupation, and if so, why was that the case?

The organizer, who will present his research on the impact exploitation of occupied Europe had on the German war economy, is especially interested in proposals from scholars working on the countries that were occupied by the Germans.

The workshop will take place between June 18 and June 20, 2009, at the German Historical Institute (GHI), Washington DC. The GHI will cover expenses for travel and accommodation. Deadline for submissions is February 1, 2009. If you have any questions, please contact Jonas Scherner (scherne@ghi-dc.org).