

EHRI Online Course in Holocaust Studies

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Ghettos under Nazi Rule – Jewish Administrations

Translation: *B08 Discussion of the board of Jewish Self-Help and the GG government on the JSS activities*

Minutes of the VIII meeting of the executive committee of the Jewish Social Self-Help (Jüdische Soziale Selbsthilfe or JSS) on 15 July 1941.

1. Activities report.

Dr Weichert reads out the activities report for the months of May and June 1941 included in the addenda and points out that up until now barely 130,000 złoty have come in from the revenues of the resident tax. The amount taken in one city alone (Tarnów) from the community tax (Kultussteuer) of the trust-held businesses – 16,200 złoty – shows the considerable sums which would be available for social welfare if the amounts declared by us from this income source would flow regularly. The assessor Mr Heinrich requests a breakdown of the amounts received from the revenues of the resident tax as well as details on the justifications given for any refusals. Dr Alten remarks that the JSS in Lublin were denied the share due from the resident tax on the grounds that the city governor (Stadthauptmann) has no resources at his disposal. Dr Wielikowski adds that the community tax (Kultussteuer) of the trust-held businesses in Warsaw is estimated at 330,000 złoty and that regarding the resident tax, the commissioner for the Jewish residential district (Kommissar für den jüdischen Wohnbezirk) takes the view that a special arrangement should be in place for the City of Warsaw and the resident tax included in the budget of the Jewish residential district.

2. Economic assistance.

Dir. Jaszuński asserts that the process of eliminating the Jews from economic life is finished. At present only a low degree of employment of Jewish labour is to be reported. To start with, an employment of Jews in the labour camps, and so outside their place of residence, would be a possibility, and this would form a passive position in the budget of the Jewish residential districts. The situation of the workers was described at the previous meeting: the camp inmates receive insufficient provisions and payment, so that the Jewish communities have to contribute to maintaining them and maintaining their families. In response to the question posed by Councillor Weirauch as to who had ordered that the Jewish communities support the labour camps, Jaszuński replied that no such order has been issued, but that one has to nevertheless help the workers who are starving. In response to a further question by Councillor Weirauch as to the current situation in the labour camps, Dr Wielikowski explained that all the labour camps in the Warsaw District had been disbanded [aufgelöst], however, at the instigation of the Governor, two new model camps made up solely of volunteers have been set up and plans for a further two announced. Jaszuński continues giving information on labour employment in the Jewish residential districts, which falls into two categories. Belonging to the first category are the closed Jewish residential districts in which the cordoning off is practiced less strictly, for instance in Krakow, Radom, Czestochowa where perhaps 20-25 % of the Jewish population is employed outside the

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Jewish residential districts. Belonging to the second category are the hermetically sealed Jewish residential districts like Warsaw. When considering the experiments in this residential district, two periods need to be distinguished: the first, when the Transfer Office (Transferstelle) was yet to be an autonomous institution, and the second period, when the Transfer Office is autonomous. During the first period the authorities proceeded bureaucratically. For example in January last year, an order was issued to provide thousands of Jewish tailors, shoemakers and sock- and stocking-makers, the workshops were set up and ready, but no orders were placed and there was no work. This was a great waste of financial resources, for many workers had some kind of employment before, which they had then left, convinced to have now found the right work. The first orders came in at the end of March and in April, and the raw materials afterwards. As it then turned out, the workshops were not appropriately equipped because it had not been known what was to be produced. The socks and stockings workshops had not received a single order up until then. The great change took place in May. President Emmerich explained to our chairman that the policy of the Transfer Office (Transferstelle) had to be changed and that the time had come to support private enterprise. In June a new director was appointed to the Transfer Office, Dir. Bischof, who then established a Jewish economic council. In a sitting with this economic council presided over by Dir. Bischof on 18 June, in which the aide also took part, it was announced that no more confiscations would take place and that every Jew willing to work could count on relief measures. Despite this, confiscations continued in the Jewish residential district. Sections of the Jewish Council have registered on 30.6, 1.7 and 3.7 in this year 4 cases of confiscation and removal of goods in the Jewish residential district, concerning traders in possession of permits to conduct their business dealings, and concerning goods registered in the accounts books. It cannot be ruled out that other acts of confiscation have taken place which have not come to the attention of the Jewish Council. The productivity levels in the workshops are far too low for the labour costs incurred, failing to meet the needs of the Jewish residential district, particularly as there are 100,000 working Jews in Warsaw. The difficulties stem however from there being no direct contact with employers. The following factors are also having a retarding impact on the formation of economic life: that no directive has been issued prohibiting the confiscation of machinery and goods, that restrictions placed on cash transactions by Jews have yet to be lifted, notwithstanding that these restrictions have become redundant after the elimination of the Jews from economic life; moreover, here the resettlement and relocation of the Jews are of great consequence, for they prevent a sense of security and stability. According to precise calculations, set out in detail in the memorandum, to be able to afford the barest of necessities a worker needs 865 zloty per month. It is thus clearly obvious that a worker earning only 6 zloty a day and whose family is forced to starve, is not able to apply himself unperturbed to his work. There are two solutions: either the workers have to be allocated additional food for their families, or they are to be given a remuneration that enables them to maintain the most primitive of livelihoods. Dr Weichert adds that he was recently summoned by the department of Population Matters and Welfare (Abteilung Bevölkerungswesen und Fürsorge) to a meeting at the Economics department (Abteilung Wirtschaft), at which President Emmerich, Dr Gater, Dir. Bischof and Dr Schlosser took part. There Dir. Bischof had stated that he is making every effort to ensure that the Jewish workers receive increased food rations [the same as] for the armaments workers. Dr Wielikowski remarks that according to his information, resettlements of Jews in the Warsaw

District from smaller to larger localities are imminent, so too the closure of all Jewish residential districts. Assessor Heinrich explains that specialised agricultural courses in line with our circular no. 16 will no longer be held because all available land has to be utilised given the food situation. In reply to the remark by Jaszuński that agricultural workers are even being sought, Mr Heinrich states that there are no objections to employing Jews in agriculture. Jaszuński emphasises that the agricultural courses in Warsaw are proving very successful, whereupon Mr Heinrich explains that already existing courses will be continued; it is only impermissible to establish new ones.

3. Various.

a.) Epidemics control.

Dr Hilfstein reports on the current situation:

In the countries known as breeding grounds for epidemics, such as Serbia, Montenegro etc., the epidemics were already expiring in May of each year. In like manner, on the territory of the current General Government an earlier extinguishing of the occurring epidemics can be reported at the same point in time. In contrast, typhus was still present in July last year. The causes for this occurrence are to be found in the weakened resistance resulting from malnutrition, in the poor living conditions, the scarcity of soap and underwear, as well as the fact that whenever an epidemic disease is discovered, whole buildings, city blocks or streets are sealed off. For this reason food rations cannot be supplied, the resultant undernourishment causing a deterioration in the resistance of the healthy isolated population and a rise in the number of new victims.

Many localities have been given the task of setting up hospitals and baths. These localities, quite a few in number, have received, along with medicines, money for this purpose. In today's conditions such facilities devour large sums the Jews are unable to cover. Moreover, Dr Hilfstein emphasises that we are threatened by a new series of epidemic illnesses such as abdominal typhus, dysentery and cholera. To be able to meet our tasks we must have at our disposal a sufficient quantity of medicaments as well as the necessary financial means. He thus concludes with a request to the department for Population Matters and Welfare (Abteilung Bevölkerungswesen und Fürsorge), that it make greater sums available for sanitary services and controlling epidemics. Diament from Radom reports that there is no Jewish pharmacy in the Jewish residential district.

b.) Food.

Dr Alten describes the food situation in the Lublin District, where neither the Jewish heavy workers nor the rest of the Jewish population are given anything except for bread and 200 grams of sugar per head monthly. In some places resettlers do not even receive food ration cards. He also points out that, should it be permitted, collecting money could make it easier to perform our tasks. He therefore requests assistance in the area of food supplies and, moreover, that permission be granted for collecting money for the JSS in Lublin.

c.) Permission to operate tradesman workshops.

Dr Alten says that in Lublin many tradesmen receiving orders from Germans are not issued with a trade licence. Therefore a shoemaker, for example, is not allocated any leather for repairs. Moreover, these tradesman are in danger of being punished at any time. He thus requests that this situation be taken care of.

translation by Paul Bowman