

Call for papers

## **Transforming Berlin's Urban Space. East European Jewish Migrants in Charlottengrad and the Scheunenviertel, 1918-1939**

Project „Charlottengrad and Scheunenviertel. East European Jewish Migrants in Berlin during the 1920/30s“, Lehrstuhl für Osteuropäische Geschichte, Osteuropa-Institut, Freie Universität Berlin, in collaboration with Wissenschaftliche Arbeitsgemeinschaft des Leo Baeck Instituts

Berlin 2009, Juedisches Museum, October 17<sup>th</sup>-19<sup>th</sup>

Deadline: April 30<sup>th</sup> 2009

From the pogroms of 1881 in Russia to the coming to power of the National Socialists in January 1933, Berlin was a place of refuge for Jews from East Europe. The migrants, who created East European Jewish Berlin and left their imprint on urban space, were poor people – refugees, prisoners of war, and students, on the one hand, and businessmen and intellectuals – politicians, scholars, lawyers, writers, and artists – with a European education on the other. Within the scope of European culture, their mentalities, politics, ideas and ideologies varied. They were religious or non-religious, politically conservative or liberal, right-wing or left-wing, Zionist and anti-Zionist. East European Jewish writers and artists formed an important segment of the Weimar Republic's bohemian world. Linguistically, East European Jewish migrants operated in at least four languages: Russian, German, Yiddish and Hebrew, and created manifold spaces of communication in those languages.

East European Jewish Berlin was essentially no more than an ephemeral environment, a 'third space', which turned into a hybrid urban culture only on the margins where it intersected with majority society. From the topographical point of view, for most migrants Berlin was the first stop across the border and the first place where they encountered the West. Berlin became a crossroads between East and West. East European Jewish Berlin constituted an artificial world within the defeated, war-depressed, and economically crisis-ridden capital of the still young Weimar Republic. Nonetheless, in that artificial world, the deprived, impoverished and uprooted migrants sometimes achieved extraordinary results. Berlin developed into a center of charitable organizations for Jews in Eastern Europe and for other international, social and political initiatives. Within the context of modern Jewish history, East European Jewish Berlin represented a peculiar potential for Diaspora experience. The heyday of East European Jewish Berlin was the 1920s. This decade will set the priorities for the conference.

The conference focuses on the spatial dimensions of the migration experience and also inquires into how migrants perceived and shaped urban space. We will be particularly interested in exploring the diverse functions and meanings of Berlin as a crucial migration center between East and West.

- 1) In which ways did the migrants perceive and experience Berlin's **urban space** and how did they take possession of it? To what extent did they live self-segregated and concentrated in **specific areas** of the urban environment in order to seek shelter or maintain their identity? Where in the metropolis did the migrants **meet German society**, and how were they perceived?
- 2) To what degree did migrants build **networks**, and which criteria were decisive for the different networks (linguistic, cultural, social, regional, national or political affiliations)? What kind of networks did they use?

- 3) What kinds of **communicative spaces** did the migrants develop, what traditions did they take up, and what ideas and ideologies did they pursue in the process? What part did migrants play in establishing transnational social spaces in Berlin, and how did they use the resources of these spaces (international relief organizations such as ORT, OSE or the transcontinental Jewish media landscape)?
- 4) How did migrants handle the situation of living in a **'third space'**? To what degree did **artificial spaces** or **visions of space** help them to survive? How did migrants respond to the challenges of their transitory existence in Berlin?

We welcome proposals for papers of 20 minutes of length (max. 350-400 words). Abstracts providing a brief discussion of the theme, theoretical approach, and sources should be sent along with a short CV by **April 30<sup>th</sup> 2009** to Alina Bothe ([bothe@zedat.fu-berlin.de](mailto:bothe@zedat.fu-berlin.de)). Electronic format is preferred, alternatively proposals may be sent to Freie Universitaet Berlin, Osteuropa-Institut, Alina Bothe, Garystr. 55, D 14195 Berlin. Papers will be selected by **May 31<sup>th</sup> 2009**.

The conference will be held in English. All proposed papers must constitute unpublished new research. As the conference organizers intend to edit the conference proceedings, authors of papers presented at the conference should commit themselves to publish their papers, if the editors of the publication select their papers for inclusion in the publication. Expenses for travel and accommodation will be covered.

For further information please see <http://www.oei.fu-berlin.de/projekte/charlottengrad-scheunenviertel/index.html> or send an e-mail to Alina Bothe ([bothe@zedat.fu-berlin.de](mailto:bothe@zedat.fu-berlin.de)).