

EHRI Online Course in Holocaust Studies

IfZ, Library, J 55

Ghettos under Nazi-Rule – The German Administration

Translation: A03 Report of the German administration of Warsaw Ghetto

IfZ, Library, J 55, Ludwig Fischer: Warschau unter deutscher Herrschaft, Krakau 1942, p. 132-143

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The Jews in the Warsaw District.

[...]

The Jewish residential districts in the area of Warsaw.

As early as shortly after the occupation of the city of Warsaw, the parts of the city mainly inhabited by Jews were declared a quarantined area [Seuchensperrgebiet]. This area was generally not be entered by Germans to thereby minimize the risks of infection. Effective regroupings weren't connected with this measure, however. The Polish and even the ethnic German [volksdeutsche] inhabitants were allowed to keep on living in the restricted are and Jews located all over the urban area didn't have to move their abode inside the restricted area.

In spring 1940 consultations about the creation of one or several Jewish residential districts in the city of Warsaw began. First the construction of two Jewish residential districts on the outskirts of the city was planned. But finally it was decided to build a Jewish residential district in the quarters inhabited mainly by Jews, i.e. replacing the existing quarantine area.

The relocation measures covered about 700 ethnic Germans, 113.000 Poles and 138.000 Jews. 11.500 non Jewish flats inside the Jewish residential district and 13.800 Jewish flats in the remaining parts of the city were abandoned.

The original number of somewhat more than 400.000 Jews grew due to the relocation of the Jews living in the western counties of the Warsaw District to the Jewish residential district in February and March 1941.

The Jewish residential district in Warsaw is a closed precinct, the area is closed off by walls, fences and the like against the surroundings, person- and freight traffic is permissible only with special authorization.

As to the administrative structure the following is to be mentioned: Already in 1939 a Jewish council was set up as a form of representation of the Jews, which in Warsaw consists of 24 members and is led by a chairman [Obmann]. The tasks and competences of a mayor were transferred to this chairman of the Jewish council in Warsaw. Thereby it could be expressed that the Jewish residential district in Warsaw is awarded with the position of an autonomous municipality to a certain degree, the mayor of which conducts municipal matters under his full responsibility.

German oversight was first conducted by the head of the Resettlement Department (Abteilung Umsiedlung). Later the office of a Commissioner for the Jewish Residential District [Kommissar für den jüdischen Wohnbezirk] was formed. The Commissioner, who is directly subordinated to the Governor, supervises the Jewish administration like a City Captain [Stadthauptmann]. To facilitate the exchange of economic traffic between the Jewish residential district and the surroundings, the Transfer Office Warsaw [Transferstelle Warschau] already mentioned in an earlier chapter of this book was established as a public corporation. It is a purely German office and is also subordinated to the Commissioner of the Jewish residential district. Its task is to surveil the economic traffic of the Jewish residential district.

In accordance with its assigned tasks, the Jewish administration possesses an administrative apparatus completely staffed by Jews, encompassing all branches of local authorities. E. g. the Chairman of the Jewish council has got a department for healthcare, a Housing department [Quartieramt], a registration office, its own tax- and financial department etc. Furthermore a series of institutions was formed in the Jewish residential district of Warsaw in order to relief the German and Polish administrative bodies and to minimize the use of Aryans in the Jewish residential district as far as possible. Here one can mention the Jewish Order Service [Ordnungsdienst] of 2.000 men who have to fulfill order-, business- and sanitary-police tasks under surveillance of the German and Polish police, furthermore the Jewish postal administration, which takes the whole mail for the Jewish residential district from the German Postal Service East [Deutsche Post Osten] and distributes it inside the Jewish residential district, as well as collecting the leaving mailing and delivering it in bulk. Its own traffic enterprises and similar institutions complete this picture.

On the economic sector a series of measures were made to use the Jewish workforce in a profitable manner. The Jewish workshops carried out commissions of the Aryan economic side with a constantly growing number of employees, mainly working for the armed forces [Wehrmacht]. The sourcing of food and other needs takes place through the Providing Institution [Versorgungsanstalt] for the Jewish Residential District, which is buying the required wares under the surveillance of the Transfer Office and distributes them inside the Jewish residential district following the instructions of the Commissioner. In addition to the Jews inside the Jewish residential district of Warsaw, there are about 110.000 Jews living in the eastern counties of the district. These Jews are concentrated in a few smaller closed residential districts, as in Siedlce and Sokolow, and otherwise live in a large number of unclosed residential districts.

### **Experiences and their evaluation.**

The Jewish residential district in Warsaw now exists for two years. The experiences made during this time are very precious for evaluating the question if the measures made so far have been suitable.

Firstly one thing has become very clear: The formation of a closed Jewish residential district inside the city of Warsaw was the right measure to reduce the spread of typhus to the Aryan population. Despite the close connection between the Jewish residential district and the rest of the city of Warsaw and despite a number of deficiencies regarding the barrier, it could be achieved that, for a long time, the Aryan population made up only 10 %

of the typhus cases, while at the same time in the eastern counties – where a strict concentration of Jews has not yet been carried out – the share of the Aryan population was 30% and more. This observation alone justifies the formation of the Jewish residential district at that time.

Further it also became apparent however, that the protection of the Aryan population from typhus can't be complete, if the principle of enclosing the Jews is not adhered to with the necessary level of consistency. The position of a big Jewish residential district amidst a metropolis makes it necessary to create lucid and clear frontier conditions and to waive all inappropriate sentimentality in guarding the border. Furthermore it is necessary to form generally equal conditions in as large an area as possible so that the Jew does not have any incentive to leave his Jewish residential district.

Also in relation to the economy one can – as experiences have shown so far – achieve a satisfying result, even in such a difficult structure as a Jewish residential district with at times 500.000 inhabitants happens to be. However, a precondition for this is the existence of a well working intermediary as represented by the Transfer Office Warsaw. The aim herein always has to be to use the Jewish work force corresponding to the needs of war as profitably as possible. At the least, a productive work performance has to be achieved, the equivalent of which is sufficient for covering the Jewish necessities of life in order to avoid an undesirable use of welfare funds.

The experiences made with the Jewish administration allow for the conclusion that the organisational talent of the Jews does not correspond to their general level of intelligence. Despite a high number of employees, commissions, and meetings, the Jews rarely succeed in bringing about order by themselves. Among themselves they exhibit a crass level of egotism. Their social activities cannot hide the fact that ultimately each and every one of them is only after his individual advantage. They are far removed from forming a community.

On the other hand their representatives generally carry out the instructions of the German supervisory body satisfactorily. It has proven to be suitable to conduct supervision with a comparatively low number of deployed Germans and – by drawing upon the few organisationally talented individuals – to leave the administration itself to the Jews.

Of course all measures in this area are only temporary provisions until the final solution of the Jewish question.

*translated by Regina Sandler & Giles Bennett*