

Call for Papers

Mennonites and the Holocaust

Bethel College, North Newton, Kansas

March 16 and 17, 2018

Proposal deadline: Sept. 1, 2017

mla.bethelks.edu/MennosandHolocaust

The history of Mennonites as victims of violence in the 1930s and 1940s, particularly on the territory of the Soviet Union, and as relief workers during and after the Second World War has been studied by historians and preserved by many family histories. This commemorative and celebratory history, however, hardly captures the full extent of Mennonite views and actions related to nationalism, race, war, and survival. It also ignores extensive Mennonite pockets of sympathy for Nazi ideals of racial purity and, among some in the diaspora, an exuberant identification with Germany that have also long been noted. Now in the last decade an emerging body of research has documented Mennonite involvement as perpetrators in the Holocaust in ways that have not been widely known or discussed. A wider view of Mennonite interactions with Jews, Germans, Ukrainians, Roma, *Volksdeutsche*, and other groups as well as with state actors is therefore now necessary. This conference aims to document, publicize, and analyze Mennonite attitudes, environments, and interactions with others in Europe during the 1930s and 1940s that shaped their responses to and engagement with Nazi ideology and the events of the Holocaust.

Paper topics are welcomed from a variety of perspectives, such as social, economic, political, cultural, theological, religious, historical and gender analysis. Some sample questions for consideration that could be applied in specific geographic settings include:

How and why was the alignment of traditional Mennonite theology with Nazi ideals articulated?

What were historical Mennonite attitudes toward and experience with Jews in the various European states?

How did those historical attitudes and experiences with Jews impact involvement?

How did varying national settings - Dutch, German, or Soviet, for example - affect Mennonite actions?

What was the range and scope of Mennonite identity and how did that influence actions?

How did Mennonites think about who counted as Mennonite and why?

How did various state actors identify who was Mennonite and what was at stake in those determinations?

How were Mennonites represented in media and/or government reports? How did Mennonites represent themselves?

What was the relationship between national identities and Mennonite identity?

How did gender impact Mennonite responses to the Holocaust?

What evidence is there that Mennonites resisted Nazi policies or worked to save targeted people?

Where and how did Mennonite business people act as suppliers to Nazi systems?

Were Mennonites beneficiaries of the Holocaust by taking over Jewish properties or otherwise?

What was Mennonite experience with or as war criminals?

What was Mennonite experience as members of the various militaries and Holocaust-related events?

How did Mennonites deal with their involvement with the German regime in the immediate postwar years?

Submit a one-page proposal that includes a title, a description of the proposed paper, and a short explanation of the stage of your research (work-in-progress, new paper, previously published), and a one- to two-page CV by September 1, 2017, to John Thiesen at jthiesen@bethelks.edu.

Registration and lodging costs will be covered for all presenters. Some travel subsidies will also be available. Publication of selected conference papers is planned.

Co-Organizers:

John Sharp, Hesston College, Hesston, Kansas, Mark Jantzen, Bethel College, and John Thiesen, Mennonite Library and Archives, North Newton, Kansas