

**Informal Communication in Occupied Societies:
World War II, Postwar Transitions,
and the Search for Meaning in Societies at War**

**La communication informelle dans les sociétés occupées:
la recherche de sens dans les sociétés en guerre
(Seconde Guerre mondiale et sorties de guerre)**

**Informelle Kommunikation in besetzten Gesellschaften:
Die Suche nach Sinn in Kriegsgesellschaften
(Zweiter Weltkrieg und Nachkriegszeit)**

23 – 25 November 2022



Organisation:

Caroline Mezger and Manuel Mork (Munich-Berlin), Florent Brayard (Paris),
Alexandre Bibert and Jürgen Finger (Paris).



If you wish to participate online, please register at Zoom

23.11.

<https://us06web.zoom.us/meeting/register/tZlqduqtrj8iHtFQGvMXHfBPDdS4bZnPbppy>

24.11.

<https://us06web.zoom.us/meeting/register/tZwvd0Coqj8rGtMwYhAUJX2uL94REu6-xWV2>

25.11.

<https://us06web.zoom.us/meeting/register/tZlPdOGupjwuHdVQiFM4SpR0nqkNgXJ9RvMo>

Introduction

Across Europe, World War II fundamentally altered communicative landscapes. War and occupation devastated established sources of information and public spheres, while in many territories, dictatorial regimes implemented unprecedented degrees of censorship, propaganda, and surveillance to constrict, mold, and (re)direct public opinion. Reliable and verifiable information became rare. Occupied Europe thereby became a breeding ground for alternative and informal channels of information, in which rumors, gossip, and exaggerated fictional narratives (tall tales) helped shape people's actions and sense of reality.

Taking an interdisciplinary and transnational approach, this workshop explores the role of informal communication in European societies, while considering its relationship to official state communication »from above« and its anchoring in particular social realities »from below«. We aim to better understand how people made sense of an ever-changing, often threatening situation through specific practices of communication and interpretation.

■ Wednesday, 23 November

14.00: Meet and Greet

14.30: Welcome note: **Thomas Maissen (Paris)**

Caroline Mezger (Munich): Informal Communication in Occupied Societies: An Introduction

Panel 1: Political Communication on the Brink of War

Chair: **Jürgen Finger (Paris)**

15.00: Alexandre Bibert (Paris): Anti-War Demonstrations as a Form of Anonymous Communication in the Early Phase of World War II

Till Knobloch (Chapel Hill/Berlin):

Failure to Communicate or: How to Reach a Dictator?

16.30: Coffee break

Panel 2: Accessing Informal Communication through Digitized Collections

Chair: **Mareike König (Paris)**

17.00: Milan van Lange & Ismee Tames (Amsterdam): Communication, Knowledge and Meaning Making Through the Lens of Two (Digitized) World War II Collections: »First-Hand Accounts of War« and the »Special Jurisdiction« Collection at NIOD

19.00: Conference dinner at the GHI (Participants only)

■ Thursday, 24 November

10.00: Visit of the Centre de documentation juif contemporain (for participants only)
Mémorial de la Shoah, 17 rue Geoffroy-l'Asnier, 75004 Paris

Thank you for arriving ahead of time, as there are security controls at the entrance of the Mémorial.

Directions GHI - Mémorial de la Shoah



13.00: Lunch for participants

Panel 3: Making Sense and Making Decisions: Persecuted Jews in France and Western Europe

Chair: **Florent Brayard (Paris)**

14.00: Johanna Lehr (Paris): Le «savoir-persécuté» of the Jewish Victims in Occupied France Through the Archives of the Union Générale des Israélites de France

Jan Burzlaff (Harvard): Informal Communication and Survival in Nazi-Occupied Western Europe: A Bottom-Up Framework

15.30: Coffee break

Panel 4: Trying to Understand the Big Picture: How to Recognize Genocide

Chair: **Elżbieta Janicka (Warsaw)**

16.00: Damien De Santis (Paris): Comprendre la déportation. La circulation de l'information concernant les déportations raciales au départ de la France (1942–1945)

Renée Poznanski (Beer-Sheva): Voices of a Silence: What the Underground Press Conveyed without Words

Caroline Mezger (Munich): Communicating Atrocity: Forced Migrants as Conveyors of Knowledge on Nazi Crimes

■ Friday, 25 November

Panel 5: Rumors vs. Propaganda: The Transmission of Information in Occupied Europe

Chair: **Stefan Martens (Paris)**

9.30: Louis Fortemps (Leuven/Lille): »Gerüchte und Flüsterpropaganda«:
The German Propaganda-Abteilung and the Monitoring, Surveillance, and Countering
of Informal Communication in Occupied Belgium and Northern France (1940–1944)

Manuel Mork (Munich): Doomed to Failure? The Propaganda-Abteilung Frankreich
Confronted with the Absence of Media Credibility (1940–1944)

Izabela Paszko (Munich): »We'll whisper it in your ear that it's going to be crummy
with the Germans...«: Rumors in Occupied Polish Society

11.00: Coffee break

Panel 6: Communication and Miscommunication in Occupied Germany

Chair: **Alexandre Bibert (Paris)**

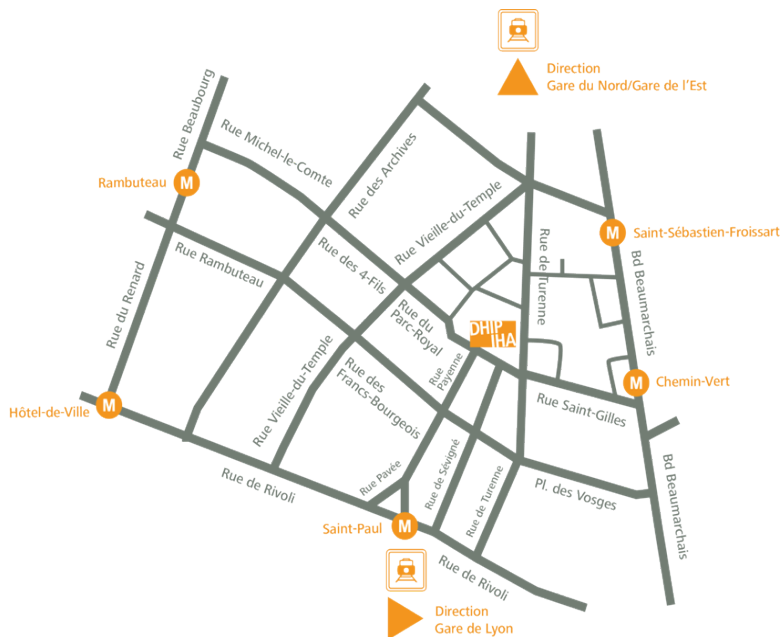
11.30: Felix Berge (Munich): Time to Flee? Informal Communication on the Eve
of Soviet and American Occupation in Saxony (1945)

Valentin Bardet (Lyon): Monitoring the Rumor: French in Occupied Germany
and the Translation of Informal Communication

Felix Streicher (Maastricht): Buzz in the Borderlands: Rumors and Fears of Territorial
Annexation in the Luxembourgish Occupation Zone in Post-War Germany (1945–1949)

13.00: Lunch for participants

Notes



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