

Panel 2: Institutionalized Collaboration

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**Crossfire of Interests –
Ghettoization and local administration in a gendarmerie district in Hungary**

The solution of the Jewish question in Hungary was significantly accelerated and moved to a new level after the German invasion of the country on March 19th 1944. The new government of Prime Minister Döme Sztójay and the local administration willingly collaborated with the German occupiers, especially the members of the Eichmann Kommando in implementing a series of anti-Jewish measures, including ghettoization.

My paper aims to examine the establishment of the ghettos in Hungary’s third (Szombathely) gendarmerie district. Hungary consisted of ten gendarmerie districts which corresponded with the layout of the military districts in 1944. Each district was led by a gendarme colonel. Gendarmerie was under the supervision and control of the Ministry of Interior and the Ministry of Defense. Gendarmerie districts were the organizational units of ghettoization and deportation in Hungary in May-June 1944.

I am focusing on the factors that influenced collaborating local administration in determining the regulations on the establishment and operation of ghettos. I investigate how the interests of local administrators were conflicted with those of the higher level administration and the German occupiers in some cases. Some of these conflicts initiated by local administrators could appear as a form of resistance towards central Hungarian and German authorities. However, I would argue that these conflicts were not a form of resistance because – despite the disagreements – local administrators never questioned the necessity of solving the Jewish question.

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Within a few weeks 22 ghettos were established in the four counties (Sopron, Vas, Veszprém and Zala) of the third gendarmerie district. From the six collection camps of the gendarmerie district (Szombathely, Sárvár, Sopron, Pápa, Nagykanizsa, Zalaegerszeg) some 17 000 Jews were deported to Auschwitz between July 4th and 6th 1944.