



CALL FOR PAPERS

The Institute of History, Academy of Sciences of the Czech Republic, v. v. i. • Faculty of Humanities, Charles University in Prague • The Prague City Archives

'For you always have the poor with you' – From Charity to the Social Politics in Cities Within the 18th–20th Century

The 32nd International Conference on Urban History, Prague, **8–9 October, 2013** • Clam-Gallas Palace, Husova 20, Prague 1

The problem of poverty is as old as humanity itself, and has particularly been a concern for the inhabitants of towns and cities. This conference focuses on the development of urban poverty policies in Prague and other cities and towns of Central Europe from the time of Enlightenment-era reforms to the mid-20th century, with regards to their early modern period origins. [In the case of Prague, the destruction of the urban social system by the Nazis is an especially important terminal date].

From the organizers' perspective, the central dynamic of the topic is the changing roles of the state and city government in the provision of urban social care. In the 19th century the Austrian state assumed responsibility for a great many aspects of urban social care which had previously been provided by the church, private charities and municipal government. This trend then went into reverse, as the state gradually restored control to the local administrations: unlike its neighbour Prussia, the Austrian state proved much less able at coordinating and financing social policy on this scale. The example of Prague suggests that cities and towns in the Austrian Monarchy embraced their new responsibilities with zeal, devoting great energy to the task of providing care for the poor. A measure of Prague's success can be seen in the 1930s, when, despite the unfolding economic malaise, the provision of care for the poor in the city was remarkably thorough and efficient. Of course, it was not to last: with the advent of the Bohemian Protectorate, and, later, Communist rule, the state once more assumed control over poverty policy, although both regimes delegated responsibilities to cities.

This conference aims to bring together papers which explore these changes in the provision of indigent care. We invite reflections on the various arguments and justifications for various reforms; the internal and 'private' exchanges and discussions which foreshadowed and followed the reforms; and the institutional or managerial dimension of poverty policy. In turn, this will prompt wider reflections on important issues such concepts of power within cities and social politics. We also invite participants to reflect on the important contribution of mass migration and rapid urbanization to the problem, and on the co-existence and inter-relationship of both state [public] and church or secular [private] charitable foundations.

Furthermore, the conference is interested in the problem of poverty in its cultural context. For example, how did journalists and artists represent the problem, and how did these representations shape and reshape wider opinion? Do we see the formation of a 'middle class' attitude that viewed poverty as something essential to city life? How did modern precariat managed to penetrate these 'middle-classes reservations'?

The conference takes its main inspiration from the example of Prague, but it is hoped that the conference will provide reflections on other towns and cities, which will help to place Prague in its broader Bohemian, Austrian and European contexts.

Relevant Information:

- Applications are to be submitted at the latest by **April 15, 2013**. Applications without abstracts will not be considered.
- The organizers reserve the right to choose.
- Chosen and/or presented papers in an appropriate form [e. g. max. 40 pages] may be submitted for publication in the journal *Documenta Pragensia*. The articles are subject to approval of the journal's Advisory Board.
- There is no charge for participation.
- Active participants from outside the Czech Republic will be provided with accommodation at the hotels of the Czech Academy of Sciences or Charles University in Prague.
- All transportation fees are to be met by participants.
- Conference languages: Czech and German. Simultaneous translation will be on hand.
- Length of proposed contribution: 15–20 min.

Organizing Committee

PhDr. Olga Fejtová, PhD.

Prof. PhDr. Milan Hlavačka, CSc.

Doc. PhDr. Václav Ledvinka, CSc.

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