Call for Papers

Symposium
Jewish and Soviet prisoners of war of the German Reich during the Second World War, with a focus on Northern Germany

Date: 13–14 June 2026
Conference languages: German and English
Venue: Quickborn, Gedenkstätte Henri-Goldstein-Haus
Organiser: Träger- und Förderverein Henri-Goldstein-Haus
Organisation: Amelie Berking, Janine Doerry, Karsten Wilke
Sponsored by: Fondation pour la Mémoire de la Shoah
Bürgerstiftung Schleswig-Holsteinische Gedenkstätten

Speakers are sought for the symposium to be held on Saturday, 13 June, and Sunday, 14 June 2026, in Quickborn (presentations in German or English).

1. Background

During the Second World War, there were two prisoner-of-war labour camps in Himmelmoor, Quickborn, 25 km north of Hamburg: one for Soviet prisoners of war and one for French prisoners of war of Jewish origin.

The former quarters of the French Jewish prisoners now house the „Henri-Goldstein-Haus" memorial, which will host a symposium on 13–14 June 2026 on the topic of Jewish and Soviet prisoners of war during the Second World War. Current research findings in this context and the memorial work carried out at the „Henri-Goldstein-Haus" will be presented and scientifically reflected upon.

Particular attention will be paid to the contrast between the treatment of Soviet prisoners of war, especially the murder of those identified as Jews, and the survival of Jewish prisoners of war from other countries of origin. Examples from Northern Germany will form a focal point of the conference. In addition, the research results will be placed in an international perspective and in the context of regional history.

The insights gained during the event will be compiled in a conference proceedings publication at a later date, if possible.

2. Focus

One focus of the conference will be the history of prisoner-of-war camps in Nothern Germany, in particular the labour battalions of Stalag X A Schleswig and Stalag X B Sandbostel, as well as the history of officers' camp X C Lübeck. The conference will

address issues relating to local and regional history, as well as ideological, political, military and economic aspects of prisoner-of-war camps.

It also deals with how the history of prisoner-of-war camps and labour battalions was handled after 1945. How was this history addressed in local context? Who took the initiative and for what reasons? What specific forms of remembrance emerged? How was prisoner-of-war status represented? How did this correspond with the politics of remembrance in the federal states of Schleswig-Holstein and Lower Saxony and in the Federal Republic of Germany?

Finally, the planned symposium will also deal with relevant research methods: How can a history of prisoner-of-war camps be written? What sources are available for research and what methods can be used to evaluate them profitably? What scientific benefits can be derived from research databases? What is the cognitive value of criminal case files? What kind of research results does a regional or local historical research approach offer?

3. Thematic panels

The conference is divided into four thematic panels. The first panel will focus specifically on the Quickborn labour commandos (Panel I). This will be followed by a discussion of the conditions that existed for Jewish prisoners of war in German captivity (Panel II). After that specific examples of the situation of Jewish prisoners of war from various national armed forces in Schleswig-Holstein and other parts of Northern Germany will be presented (Panel III). Finally, the history of Jewish and non-Jewish Soviet prisoners of war in Northern Germany will be discussed (Panel IV).

Panel I: Prisoner-of-war labour detachments in Quickborn (Himmelmoor)

Panel I focuses on the history of the labour detachments and the memorial work in Quickborn (Himmelmoor), as well as insights into the social structure of the Jewish prisoners of war from France who were forced to work there.

Panel II and Panel III: Jewish prisoners of war in the German Reich

Panels II and III examine the situations of Jewish prisoners of war in German captivity.

In all national groups, there were individuals who had been identified as Jews upon their capture. They were usually separated from their non-Jewish comrades. Their subsequent fate depended, among other things, on which army they had belonged to and which nation they belonged to. It is a paradox that it was precisely their captivity in the German Reich that saved up to 15,000 Jews from France from imminent deportation to the extermination camps, thus saving their lives. In contrast, numerous

Jewish soldiers who had belonged to the Polish army in 1939, for example, were murdered in the Shoah after their release from captivity.

Panel II deals with the international legal, diplomatic, organisational, economic, situational and other conditions relating to Jewish prisoners of war, while Panel III deals with everyday life in captivity: how were the prisoners in the camps and work details subsequently treated by the Germans – as Jews?

Panel IV: Soviet and Soviet Jewish prisoners of war in German custody
Panel IV deals specifically with the situation of Soviet and Soviet Jewish prisoners of war. The political and military leadership refused to treat Soviet prisoners of war in accordance with internationally applicable protection regulations and initially made no provisions for their care. The result was mass deaths in the winter of 1941/1942. Added to this was the deliberate murder of, for example, officials of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union or prisoners identified as „as Jews“. Only the „Russian deployment“ [„Russeneinsatz”] in the German war economy led to a slight improvement in conditions.

Various case studies will be used to illustrate the treatment of Soviet prisoners of war in Military District X (Northern Germany). For example we will take a closer look at the „Russian camp“’ Stalag X D Wietzendorf, where at least 16,000 Red Army soldiers died and „selections“ for murder took place. The labour deployment was later organised via Stalag Schleswig X A, Stalag Sandbostel X B and Stalag Nienburg X C. Sick or exhausted prisoners were taken to military hospitals and infirmaries, e.g. Heidkaten and Gudendorf, which effectively became death camps.

Key questions for the contributions
The contributions should address the structural conditions of the German prisoner-of-war system and/or everyday life in captivity in camps, labour battalions and military hospitals. What were the provisions of international law and the diplomatic framework conditions? What positions did the various states and armies to which the prisoners of war belonged take? How did international organisations such as the International Committee of the Red Cross behave? What were the chains of command in the German Wehrmacht and, more specifically, in the prisoner-of-war system? Who was responsible and in what way? How did the Wehrmacht attempt to identify Jews among the prisoners of war? What forms of violence were there? What was the significance of the labour programme? What work did the prisoners have to do? What was their daily routine like? How did they practise their religion, if at all? How did those affected experience their imprisonment? What influence did the SS and police have, and what responsibility did the leadership of the German prisoner-of-war system bear? What role did local actors such as companies or security personnel

play? How did they contribute to survival, and in what ways were they responsible for the deaths of prisoners of war?

4. Conference format and venue

The symposium is planned as a public, one-and-a-half-day event. It will take place in Quickborn and includes an excursion to the „Henri-Goldstein-Haus" memorial.

For panels II, III and IV, the Henri-Goldstein-Haus Association as the organiser of the conference, would like to solicit contributions and requests expressions of interest from speakers in the form of an abstract (max. 1000 words) and a short biography (max. 200 words).
The abstract should contain information on the topic of the contribution, the theoretical framework and the methodological approach. A selection of your own publications on the topic may also be included.

The Henri-Goldstein-Haus Association requests that abstracts be sent by 28 February 2026 to the following email address: **tagung@henri-goldstein-haus.de**

Notification of acceptance of the presentation will be sent by 27 March 2026. The organiser will cover travel and accommodation costs. No fees will be paid. Publication of the contributions in a conference proceedings is planned.

The selection of contributions to be presented in German or English will be made on the recommendation of the organising team, which will consult the scientific advisory board of the „Henri-Goldstein-Haus" memorial in its decision-making process.