

EINLADUNG

SIMON WIESENTHAL LECTURE

MÁRIA KOVÁCS

DISENFRENCHISED BY LAW

THE ›NUMERUS CLAUSUS‹ IN

HUNGARY 1920–1945

Donnerstag, 12. Dezember 2013, 18.30 Uhr
Dachfoyer des Haus-, Hof- und Staatsarchivs
1010 Wien, Minoritenplatz 1

WIENER WIESENTHAL INSTITUT
FÜR HOLOCAUST-STUDIEN (VWI)



Wiener Wiesenthal Institut
für Holocaust-Studien (VWI)

Desider-Friedmann-Platz 1/18, 1010 Wien, Austria
www.vwi.ac.at | office@vwi.ac.at | +43 1 890 15 14

GEFÖRDERT VON:



Adopted in 1920, the 'Numerus Clausus' law introduced a mechanism to keep Jews out of universities by screening all applicants as to whether or not they were Jewish, either by religion or by birth. Jewish applicants were listed separately and their admission was only possible up to six percent of all students.

The lecture will challenge a number of false historical legends that understate the significance of the 'Numerus Clausus' law and, more generally, of state-sanctioned antisemitism in the Horthy regime. It will provide strong evidence to dispel the convenient legend that Hungarian antisemitism was a policy externally imposed by Nazi Germany. It will demonstrate that government-sanctioned antisemitism in Hungary was a story in and of itself, a story whose beginnings had predated the rise of Nazism in Germany by over a decade. It will show how the 'Numerus Clausus' law not only legitimised antisemitism as state-policy, but also served as an inspiration all throughout the inter-war years for racist movements to demand further anti-Jewish quotas and legislation.

Finally, the paper will address current implications of debates over the law in Hungary's memory war and demonstrate how apologetic accounts of the numerus clausus still serve to whitewash the Horthy regime from charges of state-sanctioned antisemitism.

Mária M. Kovács is Professor of History and Chair of the Nationalism Studies Program at the *Central European University* in Budapest. Her research interests and publications concern issues of antisemitism, right-wing movements and nationalism. Her latest book entitled *Törvénytől sújtva. A numerus clausus Magyarországon, 1919 – 1945* (Budapest: Napvilág 2012) [=Disenfranchised by Law. The History of the Hungarian Numerus Clausus, 1919-1945], earlier publications include among others *Liberal professions and illiberal politics. Hungary from the Habsburgs to the Holocaust*. (Washington: Oxford University Press 1994).

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