

"VWI goes to the Collegium Hungaricum"

Wednesday, 4th November 2015, 7.00 – 8.30 p.m.
Balassi Institute – Collegium Hungaricum Vienna
1020 Wien, Hollandstraße 4

Judit MOLNÁR: Crime and Punishment? The Hungarian Gendarmerie during and after the Holocaust

The Royal Hungarian Gendarmerie was one of the most important state institutions between 1881 and 1945. Its task was to preserve law and order in the countryside, to prevent peasant uprisings as well as a socialist agitation in the villages, and, in 1944, to deport the Hungarian Jews to Auschwitz.

One of the questions this lecture will attempt to answer is why it was the Hungarian gendarmerie that Adolf Eichmann and his 'specialists' primarily counted on in the spring-summer of 1944, when the Jews in Hungary were deprived of their property, herded into ghettos and collecting camps, and finally deported. That is, one of the basic questions is the problematic of the crime.

To address this question, the size of the gendarmerie and the number of those participating in the deportation must be made clear. Their connection with other agencies, above all the police and the administration, as well as their attitudes to the persecution of Jews and to deportations must be clarified. Were the gendarmes cruel, as most of the survivors claim, or, on the contrary, did they help the persecuted, protest, or perhaps refuse to obey orders, as former gendarmes claim and some people in Hungary are still trying to have the public believe? And finally, what did they, what could they know about the destination of the deporting trains, about the true, final end of the deportations?



Another basic question is the problem of the punishment, of accountability. What was the cause behind the punishment of gendarmes after the Second World War, what was the extent of their punishment, and how was it done? Was it a political showdown, or was their participation in the deportation the real reason for their punishment?

Comments by Marius WEIGL

Judit Molnár is Senior Research Fellow at the VWI. She is Associate Professor at the University of Szeged since 1998. From 1994, she is also the deputy director of the Hungarian research group of the Yad Vashem Archives. She organised the first Hungarian permanent Holocaust exhibition in Budapest (2004-2006) and was the chief historical advisor at the Holocaust Memorial Centre between 2009 and 2011. Her research field is the history of the Jews in Hungary in the 20th century. She focuses on the history of the Hungarian Jewish Leaders during the Second World War and the Role of the Royal Hungarian Gendarmerie in the Holocaust.

Marius Weigl is historian; at the moment he is a PhD candidate in the Interdisciplinary PhD Programme at the Alpen-Adria University of Klagenfurt. His research field is "Science – Administration – Police: The Solution of the 'Gypsy Question' in Austria-Hungary during WWI".