



ORSZÁGOS RABBIKÉPZŐ  
ZSIDÓ EGYETEM  
בית המדרש לרבנים  
האוניברסיטה ללימודי היהדות בהונגריה

WIENER WIESENTHAL INSTITUT  
FÜR HOLOCAUST-STUDIEN (VWI)



## VWI invites the OR-ZSE (Budapest)

Wednesday, 17 May 2023, 3.00 pm  
Vienna Wiesenthal Institute, Research Lounge  
1010 Vienna, Rabensteig 3, 3rd Floor

### RAZ SEGAL

#### HOLOCAUST BYSTANDERS – A HISTORY OF THE MODERN STATE



The presentation offers a new interpretation of Holocaust bystanders in the multi-ethnic and multi-religious borderlands under wartime Hungarian and Bulgarian occupations that targeted several groups in attempts to realise ethno-national visions of “Greater Hungary” and “Greater Bulgaria”. Raphael Lemkin, the Jewish-Polish jurist who coined the term genocide, captured the essence of wartime state violence when he wrote in *Axis Rule in Occupied Europe* (1944) that the “Hungarian authorities have introduced a genocide policy by endeavoring to impose a Hungarian pattern” (262-3) in the Yugoslav territories that Hungary had occupied in April 1941. Raz Segal has found that some Jews remembered in their testimonies the assault of the Hungarian state precisely in this way, particularly when they described state violence against their non-Jewish neighbours; that is, when they found themselves as bystanders as well as victims. This perspective, which has remained unexplored to date, raises new questions about Jews’ experiences in the face of state violence, and it calls for rethinking assumptions about non-Jews as bystanders and only bystanders. Based primarily on testimonies of Jews and non-Jews, *Holocaust Bystanders* will show how Hungarian and Bulgarian state assaults on multi-ethnic and multi-religious societies during World War

II tore the social fabric, so that bystanders reflected in their behaviour not a prior social conflict but one in the making by design of the violent state. This analytical framework promises to shed new light on relations between Jews and their neighbors, Jewish life, and Jewish responses to destruction before and during World War II.

#### Commented by Anna Menyhért

Raz Segal is Associate Professor of Holocaust and Genocide Studies and Director of the Master of Arts in Holocaust and Genocide Studies at Stockton University. His publications include *Genocide in the Carpathians: War, Social Breakdown, and Mass Violence, 1914-1945* (2016; paperback 2020); and, as guest editor, the special issue on *Genocide: Mass Violence and Cultural Erasure of Zmanim: A Historical Quarterly*, vol. 138 (2018) (Hebrew). Segal has also published on genocide and memory politics in Hebrew, English, and German in *The Nation*, *Haaretz*, *+972 Magazine*, and *Berliner Zeitung*.

Anna Menyhért is Professor of Trauma Studies at the Budapest University of Jewish Studies, a Senior Research Fellow at the IAS Köszeg, and an Affiliated Researcher at the Democracy Institute of CEU. Previously she was a Visiting Professor at the University of Florence, a Research Fellow at the VWI, and a Marie Skłodowska-Curie Individual Research Fellow at the University of Amsterdam. She led the Trauma and Gender in Literature and Culture Research Group at Eötvös Loránd University in Budapest. Currently, she is the course director of the CEU SUN Transdisciplinary Trauma Studies, and the co-editor of the book series of the same name. She is the author of five monographs, among them *Women's Literary Tradition and Twentieth-Century Hungarian Writers* (2020). She works on a book entitled *Trauma in a Digital Age*, which will include a chapter on the theoretical analysis of bystanders.

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Please register at [anmeldung@vwi.ac.at](mailto:anmeldung@vwi.ac.at) by latest 17 May, 12.00 am and bring your ID.

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