

SUDDENLY THEY WERE GONE

Austria's and Hungary's ways of dealing with their Jewish past

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Wednesday, **October 14** | **4:30 p.m.**

Lattie F. **Coor Hall**, room 4403



above: *Holocaust-Mahnmal*, Wien, Judenplatz | photo by Hans Peter Schaefer
right: *Tree of Life*, Budapest | photo by Jaimrsilva



After World War II, the world focused on Germany, bearing the main “war guilt”, whereas some allied or “occupied” countries managed to abdicate from their (joint) responsibility for the war and the Shoah. This is in particular true for Austria and Hungary, both successor states of the former Habsburg monarchy. Austria was regarded as Hitler’s “first victim” and in 1955 it became a sovereign state (II Republic) again; the Kingdom of Hungary was abolished and finally became the People’s Republic of Hungary in 1949 (“Eastern Bloc”). As a result, both countries adopted different approaches to the question of how to cope with each country’s Jewish and National Socialist past. These questions became in particular virulent in the late 1980s and early 1990s.

In my talk I will give an overview of the course of events in both countries down to the present day. Questions addressed will include: Which different strategies and politics were used to avoid a discussion about the past? Why? How did they try to establish a “new identity”, a new “collective memory”? Who were essential supporters among society? To what extent was it successful? What is to say about the most recent developments, where the National Socialist past is connected to the current “refugees crisis”?