



© Pictures (from left to right)
 1938 http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:34_Eucharisztikus_Vil%C3%A1gkongresszus_Budapest_K%C3%B6rmener_La_Kor%C3%A1z%C3%B3_Templom%C3%A1l-1938_%285%29.jpg
 1944 <http://infoviag.hu/hir-14841-tortenelmunk-veszkorszaka-teror.html>

RUHR-UNIVERSITÄT BOCHUM

Guest Lecture at the Käte Hamburger Kolleg

Dr. Attila Jakab (Budapest)

Shadows and Lights. The Involvement of the Hungarian Catholic Clergymen in Anti-Semitism and Holocaust in the Horthy Era (1920–1944)

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After the end of the First World War the nineteenth-century aristocratic concept of the Hungarian nation turned into racism from the very beginning of the Horthy regime. The ecclesiastic - mostly Roman Catholic - elite represented an organic part of the Hungarian political and economic elite and the Catholic Church itself was one of the legitimating bases of the regime. Anti-Semitism represented an important component of the dominant ideology, being a good means for avoiding the society's confrontation to the real social problems. The Numerus Clausus Law (Act XXV) adopted in 1920 is a perfect illustration to this approach. One of the spiritual fathers of this law was the bishop of Székesfehérvár, Ottó Prohászka (1858-1927). Later, the Jesuit Béla Bangha played an important role in keeping Anti-Semitism the order of the day in the Hungarian Catholic press (such as Nemzeti Újság = National News; Új Nemzedék = New Generation). So the Hungarian society was mentally prepared to accept the Anti-Jewish laws, proposed and voted for also by the Christian church leaders in 1938 and 1939. At the time of the Holocaust, in 1944, the Christians benefited from the spoliation of the Jews, while the Churches remained silent. Again, they remained silent when the Jews were deported. For this reason the fall of the political and social system of the Horthy regime coincided with the moral collapse of the Hungarian Christian Churches, which were unable to recover from this state up to the present day.