

Antisemitic Laws, Holocaust and Pharmacy in Hungary, 1938-1945

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Representatives of the Hungarian Jewish population were allowed to study and practice pharmacy from the 1860s. As Hungary, within the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy experienced a steady population rise, scientific and economic development around the turn of the 19th and 20th century, the number of pharmacies grew rapidly, absorbing an increasing number of young pharmacists, non-jews and jews alike. The proportion of Hungarian jewish pharmacy students at the Budapest University, where 85.2% of all Hungarian pharmacy students studied from 1895 to 1945, showed a relative increase compared to non-jews, reaching its peak in 1908/1909 with 51% of all pharmacy students being of jewish origin. However, defeat in WW I and the post-war political-economic turmoil had a severe negative impact on pharmacy as a whole, including the number of students. The first antisemitic law ("Numerus Clausus") was introduced in 1920, restricting the number of students of Jewish origin at all Hungarian Universities. Other restrictions followed from 1938 on, when the first specifically antisemitic law was enacted. In the following years other antisemitic laws and decrees came into effect depriving Jewish pharmacists of their pharmacies and other properties. Finally, this process culminated from 1944 in deportation and killing of many Jewish pharmacists along with the general jewish population, in concentration camps. A total number of 227 Hungarian jewish pharmacists are known by name who died or disappeared from about a population of 900. However, the loss of the Hungarian Jewish pharmacist community can be estimated to be about 30-35%, still significantly smaller, than the 72% loss suffered by the total Hungarian Jewish population. Our research is the first in 70 years, shedding light on the history of our Hungarian jewish colleagues in pharmacy.