

**VICTORIA HARMS**

Herder Institute for Historical Research on East Central Europe

# ROAD TO REDEMPTION:

## WHY WEST GERMANS CARE(D) ABOUT HUNGARY.

17 February 2016 @ 5 pm, Reading Room,  
Vera and Donald Blinken Open Society Archive  
1051 Budapest, Arany J. u. 32.

Dissident writers from Hungary had enjoyed unusual popularity in West Germany since the mid-1970s. This lecture explores the West German milieu that supported critical and banned intellectuals from the 1970s until the mid-1990s. Who in West Germany supported dissidents in Eastern Europe and why? What was their political agenda and how did they benefit from supporting Hungarian dissidents? To understand this relationship across the Iron Curtain, we will focus on the intellectual biographies of Hans Magnus Enzensberger and Siegfried Unseld, the head of the Suhrkamp publishing house. They catered to a specific West German audience whose worldview had been shaped by the "Suhrkamp culture," which so starkly contrasted with the conservatism of the 1950s. Readers had often identified with the 1968 student movement, and - leaving their youthful penchant for Third World revolutions behind - felt strongly about Germany's historical responsibility for World War II and the Holocaust. This predisposition paved the way for the (however limited) success of a certain type of East European dissident in West Germany.

