

## **A Hungarian Version of the Historikerstreit? A Summary of the Romsics-Gerő Debate among Hungarian Historians**

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## A Hungarian Version of the Historikerstreit? A Summary of the Romsics-Gerő Debate among Hungarian Historians

In 2012 a major debate took place among Hungarian academics about how to write the country's 20th-century history in an ethically and professionally adequate way, with a particular focus on anti-Semitism and the legacy of the Holocaust. András Gerő (born in 1952), a professor at the Central European University (CEU) and ELTE, started the discussion by labeling renowned historian Ignác Romsics's (1951) writing anti-Semitic, citing passages from Romsics oeuvre to prove his point. In brief, Gerő argued that Romsics implicitly identifies with anti-Semitic narratives in Hungarian history, especially with regard to the Béla Kun regime (1919), the Horthy period and the era of "sovietization" (1945-48). Hundreds of academics reacted to Gerő's article, mostly by signing pro-Romsics petitions and arguing against Gerő's interpretation. This article summarizes the main points of Gerő's argument and the ensuing discussion and examines which threads of the discussion were the most fruitful in terms of initiating a debate about the controversial legacies of 20th-century Hungarian history.

### Springboard for Future Discussions

It was historian András Gerő's blog entry of 30 June 2012 that started one of the largest recent debates in the Hungarian public sphere in general and among historians in particular.<sup>[2]</sup> The debate is worth following as it was a good indicator of how various groups and schools of contemporary Hungarian historiography chose to address controversial issues in 20th-century national history. The debate circumscribed matters on which Hungarian historians diverge (the characteristics of the Horthy regime, the role of historians in today's memory politics, the preferred language and approaches to writing 20th-century history, etc.) and converge (acknowledgments by most historians of the responsibility borne by certain segments of Hungarian society and administration for the Holocaust, unanimous condemnation of and reflection on interwar Hungarian anti-Semitism, etc.). All in all, I argue that even though most contributors did not engage directly with broader historiographical issues, there were a few essays that could serve as a basis for a thorough reevaluation of both Hungarian history and historiography. Be it a Historikerstreit or an Ersatzstreit, the debate raised issues that started a process of Vergangenheitsbewältigung among scholars in the humanities, and it might serve as springboard for future discussions between historians and scholars in related disciplines.

### "Academic Anti-Semitism" – András Gerő's Initial Article

András Gerő has established himself within Hungarian historiography as a prominent scholar on 19th-century Hungarian social history, especially Jewish assimilation, identity construction and anti-Semitism. He has also been actively following manifestations of anti-Semitism in post-1989 Hungary, and one important context of his blog entry is the rising popularity of anti-Semitic interpretations of history and politics in contemporary Hungary. Indeed, the extreme right currently has twelve percent representation in the Hungarian parliament. Radical nationalism is prominent in public history too, typified by such magazines as Greater Hungary (Nagy Magyarország), which is sold in thousands of copies, surpassing the readership of traditional popularizing magazines written by acknowledged academics.

With reference to the rising tide of anti-Semitism in Hungary, in the article that gave rise to the debate, Gerő claimed that "recently there have been signs in Hungary of the rehabilitation of a national anti-

Semitic tradition which has been gaining momentum, including the revival of anti-Semitic interpretative frameworks."<sup>[3]</sup>

Somewhat surprisingly, Gerő then proceeded to identify the revival of "anti-Semitic frameworks of interpretation" with Romsics's scholarship, especially with the latter's recent writings. Gerő addressed his warning in particular to the left-liberal pole of the Hungarian public sphere, which, according to him, has developed a less critical attitude towards a historian whom Gerő sees as being of left-liberal persuasion himself: Ignác Romsics. While liberals and leftists castigate rightist anti-Semites, writes Gerő, "they do not recognize the anti-Semite in their midst".<sup>[4]</sup>

Gerő selected passages from Romsics's works to prove his point. First, taking up Gábor Gyáni's criticism in 2003 of Romsics's large-scale and in many ways unprecedented survey of 20th-century Hungarian history<sup>[5]</sup>, Gerő argued that his colleague had implied that the 1919 People's Republic was the work of the semi-assimilated Jewry. Second, Gerő condemned Romsics's inaugural speech at the Hungarian Academy of Sciences in 2010 about the sovietization of Hungarian historiography. In this speech Romsics had claimed that without forced sovietization, Hungarian historiography would have continued to be in the mainstream of European trends: "This can be presumed in spite of the fact that the communist group of historians, comprising home-comers from Moscow and young Jewish historians who had suffered grievances before, had attacked the so-called bourgeois historians from the outset"<sup>[6]</sup> Gerő criticized Romsics for treating historians with a Jewish background as a group of actors with a single mindset and only introducing ethnic categories when it came to Jews.

Furthermore, Gerő attacked Romsics for not making the boundaries between his subjects' arguments and his own point of view visible enough, thereby tacitly giving ground to anti-Semitic interpretations of past events. The passage Gerő had in mind was Romsics's summary of the change of elites within academic historiography in Hungary: "Finding themselves out of power, interwar intellectuals, who often faced severe discrimination, not only referred to the communist dictatorship formed after 1948 as 'Jewish', but also called its historiography Jewish"<sup>[7]</sup> Gerő maintained that Romsics's narrative implicitly justifies such anti-Semitic misinterpretations. In addition, he criticized Romsics for not pointing out explicitly that those who labeled the regime "Jewish" were actually wrong.

Fourth, Gerő chose to focus on one of Romsics's popularizing articles in the *Rubicon* historical magazine.<sup>[8]</sup> He took Romsics to task for giving an "average" or "B" grade to the "first two decades of the Horthy regime", citing social policy measures, public education and the diversity of cultural life as positive factors and the antidemocratic political system and the backward social hierarchy as negative traits. Gerő then criticized Romsics for writing about the fate of Jewry/Hungarian Jews without naming the perpetrators, as if Holocaust victims had been the victims of "natural catastrophes." ("One of the groups that suffered disadvantages - the Jews - was to face almost entire destruction", wrote Romsics in the [Rubicon](#)).

## The Debate at a Glance: Reactions to Gerő's Article

Gerő pointed to important concerns about ethically and historically adequate approaches to writing 20th-century Hungarian history and he also highlighted lacunas in contemporary Hungarian historiography in terms of its understanding of the Holocaust and the Horthy regime. This came at a time when official collective memory and "grassroots" memorialization, supported by popular historical magazines, seemed to be putting the Horthy era on a pedestal as a kind of usable past for contemporary Hungary. In

this context, Gerő's intervention can be read as a warning of a possible apology for the period from 1920 to 1944 in Hungarian history.

Nevertheless, as some contributors have noted<sup>[9]</sup>, the unintended consequence of raising these issues in an essayistic blog format and focusing on the criticism of Romsics's otherwise varied and valuable scholarship has been a rejection of Gerő's arguments by broad segments of the historical profession and scholars in the humanities in general, with only a few academics agreeing with all or some of Gerő's points.<sup>[10]</sup> Gerő's essay also sparked discussions about Romsics's narrative and argumentative style as a historian. As one critic noted with reference to one of Romsics's articles on the Horthy era and World War II: "Romsics tries to be so precise and objective that the [general] evaluation of the Horthy regime seems to be lost within the meticulous and balancing interpretation of details."<sup>[11]</sup>

Gerő's initial focus on Romsics's work inevitably polarized many later contributions as either pro-/anti-Romsics or pro-/anti-Gerő, thus preventing reflections on broader issues, directions and problems within contemporary Hungarian historiography. Furthermore, many contributors reversed the direction of the accusations Gerő leveled at Romsics and examined Gerő's previous texts and arguments, finding that Gerő himself has engaged in the same inaccuracies and generalizing treatment of Jewish populations he so criticized in Romsics's work.<sup>[12]</sup>

The reactions to Gerő's article revolved mainly around opinions on Romsics's scholarship and not on the state of Hungarian historiography and its broader issues. This has led some historians to conclude that the discussion initiated by Gerő was far from being a historians' debate à la hongroise.<sup>[13]</sup> To Gerő's credit, however, it is important to note that he initially did not intend to launch an all-encompassing Historikerstreit, as his declared purpose was to encourage reflections on the "rehabilitation of anti-Semitic frameworks of interpretation" in Romsics's historical writings.

The responses to Gerő's article have been divergent and the reviewer finds himself in a difficult position when writing a summary of a debate with over a hundred participants. The task necessarily entails abbreviations and omissions. I am unable to fully articulate every voice within the debate, especially given that contributions appeared in blogs, the printed press, and on Facebook.<sup>[14]</sup> I first summarize reactions to Gerő's article before addressing the historical and historiographical issues that the present discussion has brought up.

## Gerő and His Critics

Unlike many previous discussions among historians, Gerő's blog entry triggered reactions from a variety of scholars almost immediately. The largest group of respondents was composed of academics who signed a petition in defense of Ignác Romsics, condemning Gerő for accusing Romsics of anti-Semitism. The petition was signed by eighty-six Hungarian historians from Hungary and abroad, including István Deák<sup>[15]</sup>, Gábor Vermes, János M. Rainer<sup>[16]</sup> and Mária Ormos<sup>[17]</sup>, and encompassed historians of left, liberal and right-wing persuasions. In the following months a further two hundred and sixty-eight scholars, students and sympathizers joined the anti-Gerő petitioners on Rubicon's website (as of 27 February 2013) in defense of Ignác Romsics. The gathering of signatures is still ongoing.<sup>[18]</sup> Romsics's disciples also published a brief statement in defense of their former professor, claiming that Gerő had presented a superficial reading of haphazardly chosen passages from Romsics's vast oeuvre and could not but have reached false conclusions as a result.<sup>[19]</sup> Critics from the left asked whether Gerő had found the right person to blame for anti-Semitism in contemporary Hungary<sup>[20]</sup>, where more radical forms of

anti-Semitism seem to be the rule rather than the exception.

It was the historian Miklós Zeidler<sup>[21]</sup> (born in 1967) who presented the most detailed and text-centered criticism within the pro-Romsics group of historians. He also summarized the main arguments in the debate<sup>[22]</sup>, contesting all of Gerő's points, apart from the latter's criticism of Romsics for giving an "average" grade to the Horthy era.

Zeidler pointed out that it wasn't Jewish origins, but the experience of persecution that Romsics had highlighted as a reason why post-war intellectuals joined the communist movement. Zeidler also maintained that Romsics took a variety of explanations into account, including personal experience and social and religious background, when analyzing the reasons for joining the extreme left. As for Gerő's point about Romsics's implicit justification of anti-Semitic stereotypes about the communist regime, Zeidler pointed to the practical impossibility of signposting a historian's text with recurring "warning" signs when it came to biased sources. While Zeidler accepted Gerő's criticism about Romsics's omission of the Holocaust from his *Turning Points*<sup>[23]</sup> volume he pointed out that in his own "Hungarian Embourgeoisement" (1993) monograph<sup>[24]</sup> Gerő himself had avoided analyzing crucial issues, such as the liberation of serfs, the capitalist transformation of agriculture, the immigration of foreign capitalist families, etc.

One argument that kept returning during the debate concerned the proper use of Jewishness as an analytical category. Critics responded to Gerő's article by pointing to how Gerő himself practiced what he criticized in Romsics. While Gerő claimed that Romsics used the term too frequently as an explanation in itself, without providing necessary information on the context, Gyáni argued that Gerő's texts were also full of bold statements and generalizations about "Jews" in 19th- and 20th-century Hungarian society.<sup>[25]</sup> Furthermore, Gyáni noted that Gerő had maintained in his own texts that there was a link between joining the communist movement and the desire to fully shed Judaism to complete the process of assimilation.<sup>[26]</sup> In response, Gerő argued that while Romsics took Jewish origins into account even when they were not relevant to his subjects or the context, he had simply listed communism as one, optional platform for identity formation among many other options available to people with a Jewish background.<sup>[27]</sup> At the same time, on a popular blog a critic defended the use of Jewishness by Romsics, suggesting in a deconstructionist argumentation that historians cannot always contextualize in their prose the term "Jewishness" every time they use it.<sup>[28]</sup>

## Romsics' Reactions to the Debate

Romsics responded with a brief communiqué two weeks after Gerő's post, after having witnessed the numerous signatures in support of him. In 2003 Romsics had tried to contradict Gábor Gyáni's argument about potentially dubious interpretations of his statements about the Hungarian People's Republic. In response to Gyáni, Romsics had defended himself, claiming that he had listed mainly non-Jewish social groups as supporters of the Béla Kun regime, such as the agrarian proletariat, heavy industry workers and miners. At that time Romsics also argued that his statements should be seen as part of a decidedly non-anti-Semitic canon, as defined by István Bibó, Francois Fejtő and Victor Karády<sup>[29]</sup>, who have all turned to Jewishness as an analytical category. He also cited his previous texts in which he had condemned the anti-Semitism of the Horthy era.<sup>[30]</sup> In 2012 Romsics appeared to be more open to considering the linguistic aspects of historiography. Implicitly reflecting on Gerő's accusation, the historian maintained that "it is an important task of ours to revisit the linguistic embeddedness and social contexts of academic research and to have a dialogue about these issues. However, such

dialogues cannot be based on biased misinterpretations of sentences taken out of their context, nor can they be based on the stigmatization of the partner."<sup>[31]</sup> Romsics proposed keeping the debate within the realm of academia and he volunteered to participate in a future academic conference on the characteristics of the Horthy regime.<sup>[32]</sup>

Romsics only entered the debate more than a month after Gerő's first article with a longer reflection on the accusations leveled at him. As critics have pointed out<sup>[33]</sup>, the historian only responded to the criticism of his scholarship by the literary historian Endre Bojtár<sup>[34]</sup> (born in 1940), failing to mention Gerő's name or his charges, although Bojtár had criticized him on similar grounds.<sup>[35]</sup> Romsics also chose not to respond to attacks that questioned his practice of reading and interpreting sources and the vocabulary and explanatory models he uses when writing about interwar Hungarian society.<sup>[36]</sup>

Romsics argued that by mentioning the Jewish background of political figures, the taboos in Hungarian historiography that were characteristic of Hungarian socialist regimes from 1948 to 1989 could in fact be broken: "I believe that Hungarian history is incomprehensible without the honest and multifaceted description of the role of Jewry in it."<sup>[37]</sup> Responding to Bojtár's accusations, Romsics had no hesitation in restating his previous position with regard to the Horthy regime as a period of both accomplishments and fatal mistakes. "[Bojtár] has to admit that the network of communal schools, new universities and Hungarian Institutes abroad would not have been possible without the decisions of Horthy-era governments and the support of the contemporary Hungarian Parliament. The same goes for the eight-hour workday, the [setting up of the] National People and Family Support Service (ONCSA), and many other things as well."<sup>[38]</sup>

At the same time Romsics claimed that "I have never denied the fact of anti-Semitism, which accompanied the entire Horthy era and ended in an exceptionally horrible catastrophe; indeed, I have always drawn attention to it. In my cited historical synthesis I pointed out the role of the gendarmerie in 1944. Moreover, I also highlighted the passivity and unsympathetic attitude of the majority of Christian Hungarians [...]."<sup>[39]</sup>

Romsics refused to accept any of Bojtár's charges and only offered to make two modifications to his previously published essays. Reflecting on the earlier criticism of his inaugural speech at the Hungarian Academy of Sciences, Romsics said that he was willing to use a different term to characterize the grievances of Holocaust victims, arguing that Jews had indeed endured more than just "offenses".<sup>[40]</sup> He defended his decision to exclude the Hungarian Holocaust from his *Turning Points in Hungarian History* compilation of essays on the grounds that he had no relevant papers to publish, not being an expert on the Holocaust.<sup>[41]</sup> Nevertheless, Romsics promised to include a chapter on the Holocaust in future editions of the volume.<sup>[42]</sup>

## Recipes for a Historikerstreit: Discussions of Hungary's Twentieth Century

### 1. Competing memories of Trianon and the Holocaust

What I find to be among the most intriguing and promising results of the debate initiated by Gerő was the series of discussions conducted mainly on the pages of the left-liberal weekly *Élet és Irodalom* about the state and preferred directions of a Hungarian *Vergangenheitsbewältigung* and the place of the memorialization of Trianon and the Holocaust within it. The paper published these contributions more than a month after Gerő's article, in August 2012, and contributors included historians, art and culture

critics as well as literary historians. Gábor Gyáni's article "Trianon versus the Shoah" raised many key questions about the possibility of a Hungarian Vergangenheitsbewältigung. Hungarian historiography may well have benefited more from a wider discussion of the questions raised by Gyáni and others on the topic than from the debates that preceded it, which focused exclusively on the work of two historians, Romsics and Gerő, and were not without elements of scapegoating and projection. Gyáni referred to currently popular metanarratives on Hungarian historiography and argued that a false dichotomy exists in public history between the collective memories of Trianon and the Holocaust.<sup>[43]</sup> In the extended version of his article, Gyáni claimed that "[...] [i]n Hungary two traumatic experiences have functioned as the starting points of real and potential places of national memory (P. Nora): one of them is the memory which manifests itself in the Trianon syndrome, and is attached to the territorial losses of the country after World War I, whereas the other is a different past with the Holocaust committed during World War II in the focus. These are competing traumatic historical narratives, yet the Trianon syndrome monopolizes and reserves for itself the national claim for the traumatic past in its function of sustaining identity. The basis of reference for it is the concept of the nation as an exclusive sacrificial community, which involves the conceptual relativization, and sometimes the outright negation, of the Jewish sacrificial community. A key role in this process is played by the instrumentalization of the historical past, which is an integral part of the intellectual machinery of the political right. It is assisted by an ever growing number of organs of public history and the equally increasing number of manifestations of this particular view of history."<sup>[44]</sup>

With regard to possible solutions to this unfruitful polarity between the memories of Trianon and the Holocaust, Gyáni forecasts no solution in the near future: "The mutual absolutizing of the victim trauma, as well as the absence of moves to recognize and admit the perpetrator trauma necessarily prevent the Trianon syndrome and the Holocaust trauma from serving simultaneously as equally legitimate places of national memory in the communal mind."<sup>[45]</sup> Cultural critic Péter György continued the discussion where Gyáni left off in order to push for a more radical conclusion. He called attention to the role of historians in challenging ethnical understandings of Hungarianness and urged a rethinking of the entire Hungarian historical and political canon. "If the traumatic neurosis of a Holocaust-survivor Jew is not self-evidently part of Hungarian history and culture, then the concept of history needs to be replaced instead of the Jews. That is precisely the task."<sup>[46]</sup>

György diagnosed a possible way of confronting the exclusive role of the Trianon syndrome by turning attention to minority Hungarian communities in neighboring countries: "if we finally acknowledge the presence of contemporary Hungarian cultures of minority communities, which have [already] worked through the Trianon syndrome, then this new paradigm will marginalize the followers of the myth and will definitely challenge their momentary domination."<sup>[47]</sup>

## 2. The evaluation of the Horthy regime

Apart from the current state of collective memory in Hungary, the follow-up to the Romsics-Gerő debate prompted a revisiting of the Horthy era, in particular its tragic latter period. This thread accompanied the debate from the outset. Philosopher György Tatár called for studies that show how intertwined the suffering of Hungarian labor servicemen and other Hungarian soldiers was in the Eastern theater of war. He also raised broader questions about reading and interpreting sources and the influence of historical texts on historians' prose.<sup>[48]</sup> While no participants have reflected on these points, there could arguably have been a debate about the challenges posed by the linguistic turn to Hungarian historiography. However, given the fixed trench lines between various camps that formed during the debate, it is unlikely that discussions of broader historiographical questions will follow the current debate.

Ferenc Laczó<sup>[49]</sup> raised questions about the peculiarity of the Hungarian Holocaust and the relative neglect of Jewish sources in mainstream evaluations of the Horthy era and the Hungarian Holocaust.<sup>[50]</sup> Following up on Holly Case's<sup>[51]</sup> argument about the primacy of territorial concerns for the Hungarian political elite during the ideological struggles of World War II, Laczó argued that radical anti-Semitic ideology outweighed the issue of territorial enlargement by March 1944. For him, this partly answers the questions raised in the debate between György Ránki and Randolph Braham about the possible benefits of cooperation with the Nazi regime in order to save Hungarian Jews. Laczó brought up controversial issues that tend to fly below the radar of Hungarian scholarship on the Holocaust, given the supremacy of the Trianon syndrome, which Gyáni and György have addressed. Laczó maintained that "[...] [i]t would be worth studying the question [...] whether the desire to save Jews existed at all and who might have had it? Why should we project the assumption that contemporary actors in the Hungarian administration wished to save Jews, because this [very assumption] seems to be counterfactual in the light of the evaluation of [Hungarian participation in] World War II?"<sup>[52]</sup>

The same issue was raised in previous studies by Krisztián Ungváry<sup>[53]</sup> and Géza Komoróczy. Laczó also shares their negative evaluation of the Hungarian administration's attitudes towards Hungarian Jews, caught between a discriminatory administration and the passive and at times hostile attitude of the non-Jewish population. Such evaluations have also been corroborated by a number of recent social historical analyses, which have problematized Jewish/non-Jewish relations during World War II and the extent of the responsibility borne by bystanders.<sup>[54]</sup> Most recently, Krisztián Ungváry's monograph "The Horthy Regime on Balance" pleaded against an apology for the Horthy era, demonstrating how the interwar Hungarian state actively pursued a policy of exploitation, primarily towards its Jewish citizens, from the outset. Ungváry also showed how even seemingly positive social policies had an ethnic and anti-Semitic dimension. At the same time, especially during World War II, certain members of the Hungarian political elite curbed widely accepted tendencies towards radical anti-Semitism.<sup>[55]</sup>

The discussions also revealed a consensus among historians of different political persuasions with regard to the anti-Semitism of the political elite during the Horthy era and its detrimental effects on developments in 20th-century Hungarian history. Debates addressed the degree of responsibility borne by leading politicians (e.g. Pál Teleki) for the Holocaust and the extent of their anti-Semitism.<sup>[56]</sup> The historian Géza Jeszenszky, Hungary's current ambassador to Norway and Iceland, called the Holocaust a national tragedy, while identifying the main reasons for it in the Nazi occupation and stressing that Hungary had no sovereign government when the greatest horrors happened. He also argued that Hungarians were neither better nor worse than other Europeans when it came to anti-Semitic violence in the 19th and 20th centuries.<sup>[57]</sup>

### 3. Controversial legacies of 20th century historiography

The follow-up discussions to the Romsics-Gerő debate also addressed the problem of anti-Semitism in interwar Hungarian historiography and the controversial involvement of historians in politics during the Horthy era and in the post-1945 period. In the historical and literary journal 2000, the specialist on East Central European history and Romanian-Hungarian relations Ambrus Miskolczy took up one statement from Gerő's initial blog entry that no one (to my mind) had reacted to before - the passage on the anti-Semitic period of major 20th-century Hungarian historians such as Domokos Kosáry, Elemér Mályusz and Gyula Szekfű. Within the debate Miskolczy's initiative is unique and worthy of attention. He provided a magisterial overview of the complicated relationship of major Hungarian historians to power and dictatorial regimes. An analysis of this relationship is essential for a branch of scholarship that aims to cast away the myths about its past. Miskolczy invited his readers to revisit blind spots in the evaluation

of formative Hungarian historians: "[...] to what extent does anti-Semitism reduce the quality of the *ars historica* of great historians? In other words, how did they face sin, or more precisely, how did they reflect on it?"<sup>[58]</sup> He focused mainly on how historians compromised themselves in the radicalizing period of the Horthy regime, during the Holocaust and the period of Sovietization.<sup>[59]</sup> In a subsequent article Miskolczy examined the other aspect of his argument - the agency of those Hungarian historians who were critical of the rising tide of anti-Semitism and nationalism in the 1930s and 1940s. Miskolczy took on the task of excavating and revisiting those interwar historians and geographers (Pál Török, Gyula Prinz) who were unwilling to join the bandwagon of anti-Semitic interpretations and have since been relegated to oblivion. He also cited examples of *Vergangenheitsbewältigung* and anti-Nazi resistance among scholars compromised in some way or another under the Horthy regime (Ferenc Herczeg, Dezső Szabó, Gyula Szekfű) and he revisited István Bibó's provocative post-World War II initiative regarding the role of Hungarian society in the Holocaust. Bibó's 1948 essay, *The Jewish question in Hungary after 1944*, could have served as an *avant la lettre* clarion call to face the dark memory of World War II in contemporary East Central Europe.<sup>[60]</sup>

## Current Debates and Future Research

I find Miskolczy's contribution all the more important because it points to possible future paths for investigation, be they reflections on the involvement of Hungarian and other East Central European historians in the national question, the so-called "Jewish question", or historians' dubious actions during the Stalinist period. However, without the necessary regional comparison, it is difficult to make statements about the peculiarity of Hungarian history and historiography and the issue of the complicity of bystanders in the Holocaust. Since 1989 Hungarian-Jewish social and cultural history has experienced a boom, with many important works published in the past two decades. Yet it seems that even basic empirical studies on Jewish identity formation and social and political life and on Jewish/non-Jewish relations in pre-1918 Hungary and its successor states still have to be written. Such studies could help to answer the questions raised in the debate, for example about the People's Republic, the anti-Semitism of the Horthy regime, and the turn to the left by some Holocaust survivors after World War II. Avoiding the danger of a possible "ghettoization" of Jewish studies, future studies should explore the interrelationship of Jewish history and other issues, including the peasant question, the labor question, the Transylvanian question, the Trianon problem, etc. This draws attention to the paucity of comparative studies on 19th- and 20th-century East Central European intellectual and social history in Hungarian historiography. A comparative approach could help us locate Hungarian conservative, anti-Semitic and leftist ideologies in a broader perspective in order to assess their genealogy and their influence on contested issues. A comparative study on fascism and Nazism and its regional variants is required to answer questions raised in the debate about the evaluation of the Horthy regime and its performance in the interwar years and during World War II, which proved to be the worst of nightmares for hundreds of thousands of Hungarian citizens, Jews and non-Jews alike. All in all, on a different note, one might stress that while Hungarian historiography has made important steps towards a *Vergangenheitsbewältigung* by acknowledging the problematic traits of the Horthy and Szálasi regimes, it remains to be seen to what extent academic debates will influence broader public opinion, which is a steadily shrinking market for nuanced analyses.

## Footnotes

1. See András Gerő, Akadémikus Antizemitizmus, Galamus (30 June 2012), retrieved 15 January 2015, URL: [http://www.galamus.hu/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=147459:akademikus-antiszemizmus&catid=9:vendegek&Itemid=66](http://www.galamus.hu/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=147459:akademikus-antiszemizmus&catid=9:vendegek&Itemid=66).
2. Ibid.
3. Ibid.
4. See Ignác Romsics, Hungary in the Twentieth Century, Budapest: Corvina Books, 1999, p. 513.
5. Romsics quoted in Gerő 2012.
6. Ignác Romsics, Clio bűvöletében: Magyar történetírás a 19-20: században - nemzetközi kitekintéssel, Budapest: Osiris Kiadó, 2011, p. 359.
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