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## A UNIQUE CONTRACT

### Interpretations of Modern Hungarian Jewish History\*

The concept of a special contract between Hungarians and Jews entered Hungarian historical vocabulary in the mid-1980s. The term “social contract of assimilation” has become dominant in discussing the history of emancipation, assimilation, the so-called “Hungarian–Jewish coexistence” and even antisemitism in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. “It is a historiographical commonplace to speak of an unspoken contract,” wrote Michael Silber, “a sort of an ethnic division of labor between the two leading elements of the Hungarian middle class, the Jews and the gentry.”<sup>1</sup> The notion of the social contract of assimilation as developed in Hungarian historiography in the past two decades, however, is much more than an analogy or metaphor, it has a concreteness that allows for it to serve as a framework that determines and structures the course of modern Hungarian Jewish history. Despite the centrality of the concept, there has been no systematic attempt to explore its history or analyse its value as a conceptual tool for the study of modern Hungarian Jewish history. The paper attempts to do exactly that and probe why the concept has been appropriated by most Hungarian historians as self-evident.

The appeal of the concept is marked by the fact that it penetrated public discourse and has been employed in the debates about Hungarian Jewish history and memory and the redefinition of Jewish identity after 1989. János Kőbányai, editor of the Jewish cultural journal *Múlt és Jövő*,<sup>2</sup> published an article in the most popular daily paper entitled “On a Contract Made Not in Auschwitz.” He directly connects past and present and turns to history for a “model of coexistence”:

Hungarians and Jews can look back on two hundred years of a continuous common history. The social contract, which also established modern Hungary, came into being in the debates of the Age of Reform...and lasted until the collapse of

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1 M. K. Silber, ‘A Jewish Minority in a Backward Economy: an Introduction’, in *Jews in the Hungarian Economy: Studies Dedicated to Moshe-Carmilly Weinberger on his Eightieth Birthday*, ed. M. K. Silber (Jerusalem: The Magnes Press, The Hebrew University, 1990), p. 21.

2 For a collection of his articles on Hungarian Jewish identity, tradition and literature see J. Kőbányai, *Hagyományszakadás után* (Budapest: Múlt és Jövő, 1999).

1919. [...] Finally, 1989 offered a chance for the renewal of the contract: to collect and discuss injuries and mutual expectations concerning the new political system, to decide on the future, the contract and its conditions.<sup>3</sup>

Following historians' accounts, Kőbányai envisions the contract "having floated for a century" as a very concrete formal framework determining everyday social reality; its renewal would mean that the old form is filled with new content. He also assumes the existence of two well defined parties: Jews and Hungarians. Consequently, although the contract is based on negotiation and cooperation, it is also a mutual acknowledgement of divisions and conditions. The contract thus has a potential both to connect and separate. Its renewal would help to outline the contours of "Hungarianness" and "Jewishness" in a new era. This view of the past and future of Hungarian Jews puts the emphasis on the "external" legal and formalistic factors of modern Jewish history rather than the "internal" developments of the Jewish community or Jewish-Hungarian social relations.

This echoes what Salo Baron asserted about the overall character of emancipation in modern Europe: "it resulted from the changing structure of the state rather than from a new attitude towards the Jews or from the Jews' efforts on their own behalf."<sup>4</sup> In fact, in order to understand the Hungarian developments, it is imperative to put them into the context of European historiography, even more so as Hungarian historians of Jewish assimilation have had a tendency to view the Hungarian case in isolation or suggest its uniqueness when viewed in comparison. After outlining the European origins of the concept, I will explore its Hungarian lineage.

## JEWISH EMANCIPATION AS SOCIAL CONTRACT

Gábor Gyáni, a scholar of modern Hungarian social and urban history, formulated his criticism of the concept of the social contract in Hungary by placing it into a wider European context. He asserted that "Jewish assimilation in Hungary followed the logic of the general European process of the time. Hence there are few reasons for supposing some kind of a special agreement of a contractual nature."<sup>5</sup> The question of whether Jewish assimilation had a contractual nature and the question of a special Hungarian-Jewish agreement are, in fact, two separate – if related – problems. The idea of emancipation as a contract was present in modern Jewish historiogra-

3 J. Kőbányai, 'A nem Auschwitzban kötött szerződésről', *Népszabadság*, 31 March 2000, p. 12. All translations from the Hungarian are mine unless otherwise stated.

4 D. Sorkin, 'Emancipation and Assimilation: Two Concepts and their Application to German Jewish History', *Leo Baeck Institute Yearbook*, vol. 35 (1990), p. 30. See also S. Baron, 'New Approaches to Jewish Emancipation', *Diogenes*, no. 29 (Spring 1960), pp. 56-81.

5 G. Gyáni, 'Embourgeoisement as Jewish Identity', *Budapest Review of Books* 7, no. 3 (Fall 1997), p. 112. For the Hungarian version of the review see, G. Gyáni, 'Polgárosodás mint zsidó identitás', *Budapesti Könyvszemle-BUKSZ* (Fall 1997), pp. 266-77.

phy – and politics – already in the first half of the twentieth century.<sup>6</sup> “[A]s Salo Baron long ago explained,” wrote Michael Stanislawski, “Jewish emancipation in the West was, in essence, a contract between the modern nation-state and the Jews, in which the Jews’ recognized rights as one of the corporate estates of the post-feudal order were exchanged for a new type of right: that of the citizen.”<sup>7</sup>

As several historians have pointed out, the controversy around the Jews’ status starting in the 1770s and the Jewish experience through the nineteenth century in western and central Europe should be seen as part of wider processes, including the spread of ideas of the Enlightenment,<sup>8</sup> the institutionalisation of the liberal concept of the formal character of the state or the emancipation of various groups, including peasants or dissident religious minorities.<sup>9</sup> Thus, “the contract” involving the Jews was part of a broader political abstraction: the social contract between the emerging nation state and all its citizens. Jewish emancipation was, nevertheless, envisaged as a special issue. It was a gradual process in Germany, Hungary or even in revolutionary France, which suggests not so much that it was a reciprocal process in which certain rights were given step-by-step in return for reforms, but rather that politicians and intellectuals were divided over the issue of whether emancipation should be conditional, unconditional or denied altogether. The question of the political and social inclusion of Jews incited heated debates in the legislative bodies and the public arena. “In terms of challenge and response,” remarked Jacob Katz, “the process of absorption elicited a reaction out of proportion to the size of the group absorbed.”<sup>10</sup>

According to the customary interpretation of the process of emancipation, the granting of legal equality was connected to the shedding of differences. In David Sorkin’s words, emancipation and assimilation “represented the inseparable halves of a quid pro quo, the two clauses of a complex contract. Put most simply, emancipation was what the states were to

6 For an early critical account of this conception see H. Sacher, *Jewish Emancipation: The Contract Myth* (London: English Zionist Federation, 1917).

7 M. Stanislawski, ‘Russian Jewry and Jewish Emancipation’, in *Paths of Emancipation: Jews, States and Citizenship*, ed. P. Birnbaum and I. Katznelson (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1995), p. 265. See also, S. W. Baron, ‘Ghetto and Emancipation’, *Menorah Journal* 14, no. 6 (1928), pp. 515–26.

8 See, for example, R. Liberles, ‘Dohm’s Treatise on the Jews: A Defense of the Enlightenment’, *Leo Baeck Institute Yearbook*, vol. 33 (1988), pp. 29–42.

9 See, for example, D. Sorkin, ‘Enlightenment and Emancipation: German Jewry’s Formative Age in Comparative Perspective’, in *Comparing Jewish Societies*, ed. T. M. Endelman (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 1997), pp. 89–112. The term emancipation became popular and was applied to the Jews in Germany after the “emancipation” of the Catholics in England in 1829. For the history of the term see J. Katz, ‘The Term “Jewish Emancipation”: Its Origin and Historical Impact’, in *Emancipation and Assimilation: Studies in Modern Jewish History* (Westmead, Farnborough, Hants., England: Gregg International Publishers Limited, 1972), pp. 21–45.

10 J. Katz, *Out of the Ghetto: The Social Background of Jewish Emancipation, 1770–1870* (New York: Schocken Books, 1978), p. 6.

grant, assimilation what the Jews were to give in return.”<sup>11</sup> Understood like this, the social contract resembles more a dictate than an agreement and describes an unequal state of affairs between abstract actors: the state and an ethno-religious group that was meant to lose many of its distinguishing characteristics and was, in fact, already in transformation and divided over the issue of religious reform. The arguments and positions in the debates over emancipation also indicate an uneven relationship.<sup>12</sup> The advocates of the Jew’s legal equality were paternalistic, prescriptive and often expressed their distance and even scorn towards those they wished to incorporate into the body politic. Most supporters of emancipation explained the Jews’ condition and moral corruption in terms of their historic oppression by the state, assuming that the Jews’ plight would automatically transform with the changing structure of the state. Their anticipation was that most external differences would gradually disappear. The opponents, on the other hand, stressed that the Jews’ status was not situational but a result of their fundamental difference. According to them, Judaism was more than a religion in the Christian sense and prevented Jews from performing the obligations of the citizen and from the patriotic love of the land.

The definition of the group that was to be emancipated was also often ambiguous. The Jews were interchangeably called a nation, an ethnic group, a caste, a nationality or a religious denomination (*népfaj, népelem, néposztály, nép, kaszt, faj, vallás, vallásfelekezet* in the Hungarian case) – sometimes even within the same text.<sup>13</sup> The French National Assembly hesitated whether the Jews of France were included in the *Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen*. As Count de Clermont-Tonnerre famously declared in the subsequent debate over the Jew’s eligibility for citizenship: “The Jews should be denied everything as a nation, but granted everything as individuals.”<sup>14</sup> Clermont-Tonnerre’s argument determined the discourse about Jews in the emerging nation states of Europe. It epitomises the language of post-emancipation that was worked out in the debates preceding it. In many respects, the concept of the social contract is connected more to the debates preceding and accompanying emancipation than the state of affairs following it.

Jacob Katz thus differentiates between the changes and expectations leading to emancipation and the actual political and social processes following it: “The different anticipation harbored by donor and recipient of Jewish emancipation are perhaps not unnatural, but the fact that this social

11 Sorkin, ‘Emancipation and Assimilation’, *Leo Baeck Institute Yearbook*, pp. 17–18. He also points out that assimilation entered and replaced the centrality of “emancipation” in German intellectual and public discourse only in the 1870s. Until then both processes were subsumed under the collective term of emancipation.

12 See, for example, *The Jew in the Modern World: A Documentary History*, ed. P. Mendes-Flohr and J. Reinharz (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995) and *1848–49 a magyar zsidóság életében*, ed. J. Zsoldos (Budapest: Múlt és Jövő, 1998 [1948]).

13 This ambiguity became even more accentuated after legal emancipation.

14 *The Jew in the Modern World*, ed. Mendes-Flohr and Reinharz, p. 115.

contract is accompanied by conflicting hopes on the part of both participants augurs ill for a smooth implementation.”<sup>15</sup> Katz, while adding a dynamic aspect to the inherently static concept, retains the two homogeneous sides of Jews and gentiles. It is important to add, however, that there were conflicting hopes and reactions among both Jews and non-Jews. If the social contract is applied as a conceptual framework to the study of the “age of emancipation,” many aspects of Jewish history appear to be deviations and fall outside of the contract. Considering the gradual character of emancipation, the instances of social and political resistance, the Jews’ internal divisions, the recurring revisions of legislation in France, Germany or Hungary, it becomes apparent that the actual historical process was more complex and perplexing than the concept of a social contract might suggest.<sup>16</sup>

The idea has been further developed in German Jewish historiography to describe not only the almost century-long legal and political process of emancipation but also the social process of assimilation before and after 1871. As Werner E. Mosse wrote:

The “educational” efforts of governments had in part borne fruit. Jews on their part had, in this respect, fulfilled their side of what had been widely considered an emancipation compact or bargain.<sup>17</sup> [...] Some [Jews] considered that, as part of an unwritten bargain, they had agreed to abandon “particularist” features of their religious practice and way of life in exchange for civil equality with Christians.<sup>18</sup>

Of course, the process was not without its ambivalences,<sup>19</sup> which David Sorkin characterised in the following way:

[E]mancipation was contractual: [the Jews] were required to reciprocate for the rights they received. [...] The reciprocity demanded of Jews in the German states was comprehensive, involving occupations, education, and religion. Yet it was also elusive: the actual demands were frequently ambiguous, and the terms often shifted, a situation exacerbated by the incremental nature of the emancipation

<sup>15</sup> Katz, *Out of the Ghetto*, p. 79. Describing emancipation in Europe as a long drawn-out process, he uses the term emancipation both as a legal act and as a synonym for assimilation as a process.

<sup>16</sup> See, for example, R. Rürup, ‘The Tortuous and Thorny Path to Legal Equality: “Jew Laws” and Emancipatory Legislation in Germany from the Late Eighteenth Century’, *Leo Baeck Institute Yearbook*, vol. 31 (1986).

<sup>17</sup> W. E. Mosse, ‘From “Schutzjuden” to “Deutsche Staatsbürger jüdischen Glaubens”’: The Long and Bumpy Road of Jewish Emancipation in Germany’, in *Paths of Emancipation: Jews, States and Citizenship*, ed. P. Birnbaum and I. Katznelson (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1995), p. 78.

<sup>18</sup> Mosse, ‘From “Schutzjuden” to “Deutsche Staatsbürger jüdischen Glaubens”’, in *Paths of Emancipation*, ed. Birnbaum and Katznelson, p. 82.

<sup>19</sup> On German-Jewish identity see, for example, G. L. Mosse, *German Jews beyond Judaism* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1985) and P. Mendes-Flohr, *German Jews: A Dual Identity* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1999).

process, and some historians have claimed that the misunderstandings and tensions to which this ambiguity gave rise were in part responsible for the subsequent emergence of opposition to Jewish participation in German society and political antisemitism.<sup>20</sup>

Sorkin's argument is important because he attempts to stretch the applicability of the concept of the social contract to the later phases of assimilation, by putting the emphasis on the unspoken aspect of the contract and its implications. He deals with the late nineteenth and even twentieth centuries, when – if using historical metaphors – the era of the “social contract” was replaced by that of the “Jewish question.”

Summing up, we can say that Baron and Katz used the term social contract in an abstract sense, as a metaphor to delineate the formal framework or external boundaries of the Jewish experience in the modern era. Their concept is a rather static one and is more connected to the ideology and act of emancipation than the subsequent dynamics of assimilation. The way they apply the term also suggests that there was something common in the development of each European country. For Mosse and Sorkin, on the other hand, the concept is less of an abstraction. They use it to describe particular social, economic and cultural processes in a specific country. They create a framework for describing and explaining the vicissitudes of Jewish assimilation in Germany. It is this understanding of the contract and the emphasis on its unspoken “clauses” that is most relevant for the discussion of interpretations of Hungarian Jewish history.

## JEWISH ASSIMILATION AS SOCIAL CONTRACT

The concept of the “social contract of assimilation” was introduced by Viktor Karády, Hungarian sociologist living and working in Paris, through his historical-sociological works on assimilation, modernisation, *embourgeoisement* and the Jews' role in modern Hungary.<sup>21</sup> In one of his first essays published in Hungary – in 1981 – he briefly talked about an “implicit social contract” between the liberal nobility and the Jews, which had political and economic clauses and was based on the modernising project of the reform-minded political elite.<sup>22</sup> The idea was first articulated in detail

20 Sorkin, ‘Enlightenment and Emancipation’, in *Comparing Jewish Societies*, ed. Endelman, pp. 97–8. See also D. Sorkin, *The Transformation of German Jewry, 1780–1840* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987).

21 The concept was used and elaborated on in 1988 based on an unpublished manuscript of Karády in the most important theoretical discussion of assimilation since István Bibó's seminal essay in 1948. See A. Kovács, ‘Az asszimilációs dilemma’, *Világosság*, no. 8–9 (1988), esp. p. 606.

22 V. Karády, ‘A zsidóság polgárosodásának és modernizációjának főbb tényezői a magyar társadalomtörténetben’, in V. Karády, *Zsidóság, modernizáció, polgárosodás: tanulmányok* (Budapest: Cserépfalvi, 1997), p. 84. Karády's basic arguments about the course of modern Hungarian Jewish history were first outlined in an influential essay co-authored with István

in a long interview published in the journal *Mozgó Világ* in 1988,<sup>23</sup> and has served as the conceptual backbone of his subsequent works. Karády characterised the common history of Jews and Hungarians in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries as follows:

[It]...can be understood only through the framework of the *social contract of assimilation* [*asszimilációs társadalmi szerződés*]. This compact had two basic clauses. The first one...concerned national assimilation and the loyalty to the nation-state. The second one concerned the - discriminative - economic and professional division of labour. ... [...] [The Jews] became an important partner - and later the primary ally - of the liberal-national elite striving to secure its hegemony over Vienna and the nationalities within the state. [...] [T]he liberal nobility was to carry out the tasks of institutional modernisation, securing for itself the political power and the positions of the state bureaucracy. The non-noble, thus potentially bourgeois groups - including the Jews - received full protection by the state and independence ... in carrying out economic modernisation, the actual *embourgeoisement* of the country.<sup>24</sup>

He added that many of the clauses were unspoken and that this social contract was offered not only to the Jews but also to the other minorities.

In his debate with Gábor Gyáni on *embourgeoisement* and modernisation, Karády reasserted the uniqueness of the Hungarian case that Gyáni had questioned.<sup>25</sup> According to Karády, the “Hungarian-Jewish symbiosis” in the nineteenth century was unique insofar as there was a western European-type development in an eastern European country.<sup>26</sup> “Its interpretation does require a special conceptual framework,” he explained. “I created the concept of the ‘social contract of assimilation’ for that.”<sup>27</sup> The uniqueness of the Hungarian case thus lies in the fact that it does not fit into the customary division of “eastern Jews” and “western Jews.”<sup>28</sup> Karády

(*cont. from previous page*) Kemény in French. They talk about an “alliance de fait,” which they describe as cooperation, partnership, a strategic alliance: a social and political alliance based on the mutual interest and benefit of both parties - determined by the liberal project of modernization. See, V. Karády and I. Kemény, ‘Les juifs dans la structure des classes en Hongrie: essai sur les antécédents historiques des crises d’antisémitisme du XXe siècle’, *Actes de la Recherche en Sciences Sociales*, no. 22 (June 1978), esp. pp. 34–50.

23 The interview was republished in a collected volume of his earliest articles to appear in Hungarian. See, V. Karády, ‘Zsidó identitás és asszimiláció Magyarországon (László Marjanucz’s interview)’, in V. Karády, *Zsidóság, modernizáció, polgárosodás: tanulmányok* (Budapest: Cserépfalvi, 1997), pp. 11–113.

24 Karády, ‘Zsidó identitás és asszimiláció Magyarországon’, in Karády, *Zsidóság, modernizáció, polgárosodás*, p. 19.

25 See G. Gyáni, ‘Forráskritika és bizonyítás: viszonyválasz Karády Viktornak’, *Budapesti Könyvszemle-BUKSZ* no. 2 (Spring 1998), pp. 20–7.; and V. Karády, ‘Zsidó és nem zsidó polgárosodás?: Válasz Gyáni Gábornak’, *Budapesti Könyvszemle-BUKSZ*, no. 2 (Spring 1998), pp. 9–19.

26 For the most well known conceptualization of this idea see E. Mendelsohn, *The Jews of East Central Europe between the World Wars* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1983).

27 Karády, ‘Zsidó és nem zsidó polgárosodás?’, *Budapesti Könyvszemle-BUKSZ*, p. 17.

28 See, for example, V. Karády, ‘Asszimiláció és társadalmi krízis: a magyar zsidó társadalomtörténet konjunkturális vizsgálatához’, in V. Karády, *Zsidóság, modernizáció, polgárosodás: tanulmányok* (Budapest: Cserépfalvi, 1997), p. 116. (The essay was originally published in *Világosság* in 1993.)

lists the following aspects that make Hungary unique in comparison with countries to the west: the size and proportion of the Jewish population (it was almost one million, over five per cent of the total population after the turn of the century); the accelerated process of assimilation of a Jewish population that mostly immigrated in the first half of the nineteenth century; the relatively backward, archaic political and social structure and the lack of a native middle-class to assimilate into; the assimilation into a dominant minority as opposed to German culture; and “institutional self-assimilation,” which meant the thorough magyarisation of Jewish religious, educational, communal and cultural organisations.<sup>29</sup>

In fact, the concept of a tacit social contract was articulated by several other authors –writing outside Hungary – at the turn of the 1970s and 80s to describe the ostensible unique alliance between the Hungarian elite and the Jews. As Andrew C. Janos wrote:

The position of this ethnic community was regulated as much by formal legislation as by tacit understanding. On the one hand, the Emancipation Act of 1868 granted Jewish citizens equality before the law, opening to them all avenues leading to economic entrepreneurship and participation. On the other hand, the *informal social contract* that now took effect barred members of the Jewish faith from politics and public life.<sup>30</sup> (*italics mine*)

The assertion that serves as the basis for one of the “clauses” of the social contract, that is that the Jews had a “dominant” role in the modernisation of the country, has a long history and leads to diametrically opposing conclusions. In 1874 Ágoston Trefort, Minister of Education and Religion, expressed the official liberal view about the positive and welcome impact of the Hungarian “Israelites” on Hungary’s development:

As far as I am acquainted with the various European states, I know of no country where the Israelite population exercises as much weight in its numbers, spiritual talent, activities and wealth, on the one hand, and is as significant in the economy with its peculiar social conditions, on the other hand, as in Hungary.<sup>31</sup>

This view would dominate the assimilationist/national liberal historiography and many of the works on Jewish history written up to today.

29 Karády, ‘Asszimiláció és társadalmi krízis’, in Karády, *Zsidóság, modernizáció, polgárosodás*, pp. 117–18.

30 A. C. Janos, *The Politics of Backwardness in Hungary, 1825–1945* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1982), p. 113. Janos’s work was cited in the debate between Gábor Gyáni and Viktor Karády over the relationship of Jewish assimilation and modernization in Hungary, but not in connection with the concept of the social contract. See Karády, ‘Zsidó és nem zsidó polgárosodás?’, *Budapesti Könyvszemle–BUKSZ*, p. 17. and Gyáni, ‘Forráskritika és bizonyítás’, *Budapesti Könyvszemle–BUKSZ*, p. 25.

31 Á. Zeller, *A magyar egyházpolitika, 1847–1894*, 2 vols. (Budapest, 1894), p. 281. Quoted in Silber, ‘A Jewish Minority in a Backward Economy’, in *Jews in the Hungarian Economy*, ed. Silber, p. 3.



In contrast, Gyula Szekfű, the most influential historian-cum-ideologist of the interwar period, published a book in 1920 about the long Hungarian nineteenth century describing it as the history of three liberal generations that led the country and Magyardom to a tragic state by the 1910s.<sup>32</sup> According to Szekfű the first generation of liberals in the Age of Reform (1830s and 40s) attempted but failed to “control” the situation by urging the Hungarians to carry out modernisation themselves and by limiting Jewish immigration. Szekfű blames the Hungarian gentry for its inability to adapt to the conditions of the age and views the immigration of eastern Jews as an obstacle to genuine Jewish assimilation.<sup>33</sup> To all this are added the harmful effects of the dominant liberal policy after 1867. Szekfű distinguishes between “our” magyarised old Jews and the superficially or not at all magyarised “recent” immigrants.<sup>34</sup> Although he denies the Hungarian-ness only of the vaguely defined immigrants, all his criticism pertains to the most assimilated layer of Jewry.<sup>35</sup> Szekfű writes:

The empty space created by carelessness and organisational incompetence was easily conquered by the Jews, whose experience and centuries long instincts we could hardly compete with. Hungarian capitalism is represented and nurtured by Jews more than in any other states. [...] The unanticipated huge resources of young Hungarian capitalism fell into the hands of a stratum, which was alien yesterday and is Hungarian only in name today.... [...] The liberal position that systematically considers the Jews, even the ones entering the Galician border today, as a religious denomination and not an ethnic group [*népfaj*] fell extremely short of solving the question. [...] The development is visible stage by stage. Under the second generation our economic life gained a Jewish character to let the spiritual culture of the third generation to be dominated by the uncontrolled influx of these masses of strangers.<sup>36</sup> [...] This body of one million Jews, according to the illusionary arrangements of the Hungarian state and public, declared themselves Hungarian and comprised one single *Magyar* Jewish stratum....<sup>37</sup>

Szekfű, comparing the Hungarian developments to those in Germany as depicted by Werner Sombart, is one of the first historians to conceptualise the notion of a contract between the Hungarian liberal elite and the Jews and use it as a framework for his interpretation of modern Hungarian history, even if he does not use the term “contract” itself. His ideas, for sure, conform to the dominant public discourse and official antisemitism of the

32 Gy. Szekfű, *Három Nemzedék és ami utána következik* (Budapest: Maecenas, 1989 [1934]), pp. 152–60, 236–49, 328–44, 416–65.

33 The unstoppable flood of Jewish immigrants from the east was a persistent myth which had no basis in social reality. See W. Pietsch, ‘A zsidók bevándorlása Galiciából és a magyarországi zsidóság,’ in *Reform és Ortodoxia* (Budapest: Múlt és Jövő, 1999), pp. 36–50.

34 Of course, any distinction like that is arbitrary and begs the question of who will decide based on which criteria. One cannot fail to evoke the famous sentence of Karl Lueger, Vienna’s antisemitic mayor between 1897 and 1910: “I decide who is a Jew.”

35 This paradox is a basic trope in Hungarian antisemitic literature.

36 Szekfű, *Három Nemzedék*, pp. 242, 43, 47, 48, 49.

37 Szekfű, *Három Nemzedék*, p. 332.

interwar period blaming the Jews for the ills of the country and considering Hungarians as their victims. István Bethlen, the prime minister of the new conservative “Christian” regime after the revolutionary upheavals of 1918–19 stated the following: “The social Jewish question must be solved in the economic sphere, that is to enable us to be what we are with them now even without them. This is their interest too, since at the very moment they become dispensable, the harmony will be restored.”<sup>38</sup>

George Schöpflin, writing in 1981, elaborated further the idea of a “tacit compact” between the “neo-feudal gentry and the assimilating Jews” in his interesting yet almost entirely ignored discussion of the ambivalences of assimilation in Hungary.<sup>39</sup> Schöpflin’s intention was to be able to account for the seemingly unexpected fundamental turn in the official policy of Hungary after the First World War. Similarly to Szekfű, he looks at the period of the Monarchy and the granting of emancipation from the perspective of what happened afterwards. “It was therefore,” he writes,

a bizarre state of affairs. The bourgeois transformation of the country was undertaken by a foreign element at the behest of a native caste that had been unwilling or unable to bring about the transformation itself. But the political leadership of the country remained in the hands of the gentry, and the definition of nationhood likewise remained an emanation of the traditional neo-feudal elite. This status quo had a fatal consequence for the assimilating Jews, namely that the terms of assimilation were not fixed, but could be varied according to the power interests of the gentry.<sup>40</sup>

Schöpflin’s thesis greatly resembles David Sorkin’s account of the developments in Germany. He focuses on the traditional and national character of the elite, not on their having been liberals and modernisers. He describes the contract as an uneven one, the terms of which were determined and potentially changed by the group in power. Importantly, he also explores the structure of the compact, not only the particular actors involved.

Schöpflin bases his argument on the single most influential work on the assimilation of Jews in Hungary: István Bibó’s essay, *Jewish Question in Hungary after 1944* written in 1948 under the impact of the Holocaust.<sup>41</sup> Schöpflin utilises Bibó’s idea of the “falsity of the premise on which assim-

38 Quoted in Karády, ‘Zsidó identitás és asszimiláció Magyarországon’, in Karády, *Zsidóság, modernizáció, polgárosodás*, p. 61.

39 G. Schöpflin, ‘Jewish Assimilation in Hungary: A Moot Point’, in *Jewish Assimilation in Modern Times*, ed. B. Vago (Boulder, Colo.: Westview Press, 1981), p. 77. (The paper was originally presented at a conference in 1978.)

40 Schöpflin, ‘Jewish Assimilation in Hungary’, in *Jewish Assimilation in Modern Times*, ed. Vago, pp. 76–7.

41 I. Bibó, ‘Zsidókérdés Magyarországon 1944 után’, in *Zsidókérdés, asszimiláció, antiszemitizmus*, ed. P. Hanák (Budapest: Gondolat, 1984), pp. 135–294. In English see I. Bibó, *Democracy, Revolution, Self-Determination: Selected Writings*, ed. K. Nagy, trans. A. Boros-Kazai (Boulder, Co.: Atlantic Research and Publications and Columbia University Press, 1991).

ilation was based,” according to which the process of modernisation left Hungarian society confused and weak in terms of its intellectual identity making the assimilation of Jews to external forms, certain institutions and ideals relatively easy.<sup>42</sup> According to Bibó, however, Jewish society was confused, heterogeneous and insecure too. “In reality,” he writes, “this body of people could represent and carry out not even a tenth of what their enemies and supporters charged them with.”<sup>43</sup> They were unable to fulfil the social function of a middle-class. Thus, claims Bibó, two confused and shapeless groups with shifting identities were involved in an assimilation process that was closely related to the process of modernisation. All this was connected to the fact that

Hungarian society was assimilating or offered assimilation based on dishonest and deceptive conditions from the very beginning, beguiling itself and the assimilants as well. Hungarian society deceived itself as it placed the whole issue of Jewish assimilation into the grand illusion of nineteenth-century Hungarian politics: the dream of the linguistic magyarisation of the entire territory of historic Hungary. By this the emphasis shifted from the real social process of assimilation to the demonstrative giving up of linguistic difference and political separatism.<sup>44</sup>

Once again, we find a theorised articulation of the social contract without using the term itself. It is also interesting that Bibó’s analysis, with a radically different intent and ideological background, resembles that of Szekfű: they both emphasise the illusionary character of the assimilation process and see it as the cause of ambivalences and future problems.<sup>45</sup> Bibó thus accepts that although many Jews were only “superficially” assimilated, they could deceive themselves as they fulfilled what was prescribed by the political program of assimilation.<sup>46</sup> At the same time, he considers the significant social, cultural and economic role of the Jews a politically inspired exaggeration.

Although one should not deny the overbearing presence and influence of a normative – political and ideological – discourse of assimilation, it must be emphasised that it masks the actual “depth,” complexities and realities of the social process of the Jews’ integration into Hungarian society to

<sup>42</sup> Schöpflin, ‘Jewish Assimilation in Hungary’, in *Jewish Assimilation in Modern Times*, ed. Vago, p. 77.

<sup>43</sup> Bibó, ‘Zsidókérdés Magyarországon 1944 után’, in *Zsidókérdés, asszimiláció, antiszemitizmus*, ed. Hanák, p. 241.

<sup>44</sup> Bibó, ‘Zsidókérdés Magyarországon 1944 után’, in *Zsidókérdés, asszimiláció, antiszemitizmus*, ed. Hanák, p. 249.

<sup>45</sup> For a discussion of Bibó’s relationship to Szekfű and his historical views see I. Z. Dénes, *Eltorzult magyar alkot: Bibó István vitája Németh Lászlóval és Szekfű Gyulával* (Budapest: Osiris, 1999).

<sup>46</sup> Bibó, ‘Zsidókérdés Magyarországon 1944 után’, in *Zsidókérdés, asszimiláció, antiszemitizmus*, ed. Hanák, p. 249.

a large extent.<sup>47</sup> The discourse of assimilation has a strong bearing on the scholarship on Jewish assimilation and the related concept of the social contract.<sup>48</sup> Whereas Bibó accepts that many Jews were, in fact, not assimilated enough exactly because of the way the terms of assimilation were set, Karády talks about the overdoing and overachieving of what was expected in the assimilation contract as a result of lingering stereotypes, suspicion and even hostility, and suggests that assimilation was even “too successful.”<sup>49</sup> The idea of “assimilational overachievement” is a key aspect of Karády’s understanding of the social contract and what went wrong with it.<sup>50</sup> For Bibó, thus, antisemitism is partly a logical result of what he saw as the formal and non-substantial character of assimilation and the retaining of differences. For Karády, on the other hand, it is more the overzealous discarding of Jewish identity and culture for a Hungarian identity that creates tensions.<sup>51</sup> Historical realities are blurred in both cases, as both authors “measure” assimilation against a normative idea of Magyardom and assume the existence of a stable, homogeneous host society rather than an idea(l) of Hungarianness, which obscures rather than reveals the everyday reality of social relations.<sup>52</sup>

As it is often emphasised in historiography, the magyarisation “clause” of the contract became superfluous after the First World War, as there was no more need for augmenting the number of Hungarians in a state – shrunk to a third of its original territory – that had no more considerable national minorities. The Jews’ genuine Hungarianness was increasingly questioned when most of the Yiddish-speaking Hasidic and Orthodox communities of the north-eastern territories belonged to the successor states. This, once again, suggests the highly formal and pragmatic character of assimilation that was a reversible process determined by the politics of the state. At the same time, however, the continuing weakness of Zionism and the Jews’ loyalty to the new regime – of nationalism, revisionism and antisemitism –

47 For an insightful criticism of Bibó’s argument in this respect see Kovács, ‘Az asszimilációs dilemma’, *Világosság*, p. 607.

48 For a recent critique of this trend – focussing on the works of Karády – see É. Kovács, ‘Az asszimiláció ambivalenciái’, *Korall*, no. 10 (December 2002), pp. 200–7. Based on the latest western literature on assimilation and her empirical work on the Jewish community of Kassa (Kaschau, Košice), Kovács emphasises the importance of regional differences and the existence of Jewish identities that do not fit into the assimilation model.

49 V. Karády, ‘Antiszemizmus, asszimiláció és zsidó identitás Magyarországon a régi rendszertől az ezredfordulóig: összefoglalási kísérlet’, in V. Karády, *Önazonosság, sorsválasztás: a zsidó csoportazonosság történelmi alakváltozásai Magyarországon* (Budapest: Új Mandátum, 2001), p. 47. (Originally published in *Regio* in 1991.)

50 See, for example, Karády, ‘Asszimiláció és társadalmi krízis’, in Karády, *Zsidóság, modernizáció, polgárosodás*, p. 121.

51 Of course, both arguments can be found – side by side – in the repertoire of antisemitic discourse.

52 It must be noted that even though Karády repeatedly asserts the dynamic nature of assimilation, the ups and downs in the relationship of Hungarians and Jews and the existence of mutual influences and changes, it does not affect his overall interpretative framework determined by the social contract.

need to be explained as well. Thus, Bibó also discusses the “division of labour” aspect of “the contract,” looking for the causes of the radicalisation of antisemitism in the interwar period. According to him,

Hungary after 1919 was ruled by a basically feudal-conservative political system, which was born amid anti-Jewish atrocities and was based on the limitation of the Jews’ participation in politics and state offices and, at the same time, the safeguarding of their economic activities, even their reinforcement through monopoly-capitalism.<sup>53</sup>

Accordingly, the centrality of the “Jewish question” seen as the fundamental problem of society was to a large extent a result of this duality in official politics. It is especially significant that Bibó stretches the division of labour “clause” of the contract to span the interwar period, when according to many others the contract was already abrogated.

Karády, similarly to Bibó, introduces the issue of duality and ambivalence into his concept of the social contract. According to him it was the fear of the development of an alternative (economic) ruling class constituted by intruders – resulting from the social contract – that was one of the factors leading to the antisemitism of the interwar period.<sup>54</sup> Despite the official rhetoric and policies, however, the state and the new ruling elite needed and could not do away with the financial and economic “contributions” of Jews. As for the realities of assimilation, Karády asserts that the increasing antisemitic hysteria accompanying the rise of fascism did not hinder the objective circumstances of assimilation and the level of Hungarian-Jewish integration did not decrease.<sup>55</sup> In fact, in his articles on the different aspects of assimilation – with a special emphasis on conversion, name changes and mixed marriages – he repeatedly emphasises the apparent discrepancy between state policies and the interactions between certain segments of Jewish and non-Jewish society.<sup>56</sup> In connection with social developments between 1938 and 1943, he maintains that there was a great difference between the word and spirit of the law (anti-Jewish legislation) and

<sup>53</sup> Bibó, ‘Zsidókérdés Magyarországon 1944 után’, in *Zsidókérdés, asszimiláció, antiszemitizmus*, ed. Hanák, p. 141.

<sup>54</sup> See Karády, ‘Antiszemitizmus, asszimiláció és zsidó identitás’, in Karády, *Önazonosítás, sorsválasztás*, p. 42. For the classical conceptualization of the development of two parallel middle classes see F. Erdei, ‘A magyar társadalom a két háború között’, in *Magyarország társadalomtörténete*, vol. 2, ed. G. Gyáni (Budapest: Nemzeti tankönyvkiadó, 1995), pp. 43–99.

<sup>55</sup> Karády, ‘Antiszemitizmus, asszimiláció és zsidó identitás’, in Karády, *Önazonosítás, sorsválasztás*, p. 48.

<sup>56</sup> See, for example, V. Karády, ‘A felekezetek közötti házasságok általános szociológiája a régi rendszer idején’, in V. Karády, *Zsidóság, modernizáció, polgárosodás: tanulmányok* (Budapest: Cserépfalvi, 1997), pp. 196–249; and V. Karády, ‘Modernizáció és asszimiláció a zsidóság történelmi névanyagának tükrében’, in V. Karády, *Önazonosítás, sorsválasztás: a zsidó csoportazonosság történelmi alakváltozásai Magyarországon* (Budapest: Új Mandátum, 2001), pp. 153–67.

actual social practices.<sup>57</sup> It seems that the details of Karády's diverse and extensive historical-sociological research transcend the limits of the social contract he offers as an overarching interpretative framework.

The primary explanatory value of the concept is that it offers an explanation for the lack of official antisemitism before, and its sudden upsurge and persistence after 1918. While the more abstract and general understanding of the social contract as delineated by Baron and Katz is connected to the early debates preceding and accompanying emancipation, its more specific interpretation – as in the German and Hungarian examples – views the era that the contract refers to from the point of view of the period and debates succeeding it. Whereas the early debates were prescriptive and primarily concerned with the future and – overall – had optimistic expectations, the intensified debates in the 1920s were obsessed with the past, were pessimistic, apologetic, critical or condemnatory.<sup>58</sup> The origins of the concept of the social contract is characterised by this innate tension with positive and negative interpretations encoded in its historical development.<sup>59</sup>

## JEWISH HISTORY AS SOCIAL CONTRACT

The major appeal of the concept of the social contract as used in contemporary historiography is its familiarity; it establishes a continuity with the nineteenth-century assimilationist/national liberal narrative of Hungarian Jewish history. The great contribution of Karády is that he replaced the rather vague terminology of a “tacit compact” or “unspoken contract” customary by the early 1980s with a special socio-historical category, which describes a well-defined set of developments and provides them with a def-

57 V. Karády, ‘Zsidótörvények és életfeltételek a szociális jelzők tükrében (1938–1943)’, in V. Karády, *Zsidóság, modernizáció, polgárosodás: tanulmányok* (Budapest: Cserépfalvi, 1997), p. 287. (Originally published in *Medvetánc* in 1985.)

58 For a highly informative source see the *enquête* of academics, writers and artists debating whether the “Jewish question” existed in Hungary and what were its possible reasons and solutions organised by the progressive sociological journal *Huszedik Század* in 1917. For a selected republication see in *Zsidókérdés, asszimiláció, antiszemitizmus*, ed. P. Hanák (Budapest: Gondolat, 1984), pp. 13–116.

59 Much of the statistics to prove the existence of a ‘division of labor’ are based on works which were written with antisemitic intent in the interwar period, attempting to prove the ‘domination’ and even ‘takeover’ (*térfoglalás*) of most of the economic and cultural spheres of Hungary by “the Jews.” See, for example, A. Kovács, *A zsidóság térfoglalása Magyarországon* (Budapest: Kellner, 1933). It is not only the data but also the rhetoric of their interpretation that unwittingly enters the writing of Hungarian Jewish history. Loaded and ambiguous expressions, such as the ‘Jewish question,’ ‘Jewish dominance,’ ‘in Jewish hands,’ ‘controlled by Jews,’ ‘Jewish overrepresentation’ or ‘Jewish takeover’ are abundant. Tamás Csíki, for example, in his important book on the history of Jews in the towns of northern and north-eastern Hungary uses the loaded and clearly antisemitic *térfoglalás* term as a neutral socio-historical category. See T. Csíki, *Városi zsidóság Északkelet- és Kelet-Magyarországon* (Budapest: Osiris, 1999).

inite form at the same time. The emphasis is not on emancipation – which is a given – but on the interrelated processes of modernisation and assimilation. It is due to the influence of Karády's works that the concept is much more central in Hungary than it is in Germany, where we can find almost identical interpretations of similar historical developments. The *social contract of assimilation*, however, is considered to be a unique Hungarian phenomenon, as – according to Karády – nowhere else in Europe did the Jews fulfil such crucial and diverse social functions.<sup>60</sup> Ultimately, the concept is an attempt to conceptualise and interpret a nation-building project: the complicated connection between modernisation and assimilation.

Accordingly, the contract was also offered to the “other” nationalities, who did not accept it. The essence of the Jews' post-emancipation status, however, was that they were considered a religious denomination – Magyars of the Mosaic faith – and not a national minority.<sup>61</sup> In fact, in most of his works Karády compares Jewish sociological and economic patterns with those of the other religious groups. The evidence for the social contract is derived, to a large extent, from the Jews' demographic, economic, residential and occupational patterns. The question, however, is if it is possible to distinguish between assimilation and economic contribution which was based on a contract and which remained outside its confines. The rapid magyarisation of the Jews is customarily demonstrated by the fact that in 1910 almost 80 percent of Jews (by religion) declared Hungarian as their mother tongue. As a result of assimilation the proportion of Hungarians reached 50 percent by 1900 and almost 55 percent by 1910. At the same time, most works on assimilation emphasise that out of the 1.7 million people to assimilate between 1850 and 1910 600,000 were Germans another 600,000 Jews and 400,000 Slovaks.<sup>62</sup> It has also been demonstrated that the Germans had an important economic role and contributed to the emergence of the modern middle-class.<sup>63</sup>

Why was Jewish assimilation and economic and cultural contribution based on a special contract as opposed to the hundreds of thousands of Germans, Slovaks or Rumanians? And if it resulted from a contract, how is it different from assimilation not based on a contract? According to the

60 Karády, 'A zsidóság polgárosodásának és modernizációjának főbb tényezői', in Karády, *Zsidóság, modernizáció, polgárosodás*, p. 82.

61 The legislation regulating the position of the nationalities both in 1849 and in 1868 dealt with Germans, Slovaks etc., but did not consider the Jews a separate nationality. See L. Katus, 'Egy kisebbségi törvény születése: Az 1868. évi nemzetiségi törvény évfordulójára', *Társadalmi Szemle*, no. 1 (1993), pp. 99–127.

62 See P. Hanák, 'A zsidóság asszimilációja a Monarchiában,' in *Zsidókérdés, asszimiláció, antiszemitizmus*, ed. P. Hanák (Budapest: Gondolat, 1984), p. 360. For an English version of the article see P. Hanák, 'Problems of Jewish Assimilation in Austria-Hungary in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries', in *The Power of the Past: Essays for Eric Hobsbawm*, ed. P. Thane, G. Crossick and R. Floud (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), pp. 235–50.

63 See P. Hanák, 'Polgárosodás és asszimiláció Magyarországon a 19. században', *Történelmi Szemle* (April 1974), pp. 513–36.

theory of the social contract, it was mutually beneficial for the ruling liberal elite and representatives of the Jewish middle and upper classes. It was also acknowledged by the official stance of the Jewish community, advocating loyalty to the state and magyarisation, as opposed to the politics represented by the organisations of the nationalities. The concept thus focuses on the elites – individuals and groups of political, economic and ideological power – and can account for only a very limited segment of assimilation.

As one of the most unique factors of the Hungarian case, Karády mentions the almost total exclusion of Jews from state offices as opposed, for example, to France.<sup>64</sup> It is worth invoking Werner E. Mosse's description of the situation in Germany after the 1870s:

[D]uring the great antiliberal and anti-emancipatory reaction, the division was once again reinforced: Jews, all but completely excluded from official positions in the state, were compensated through opportunities in other fields, and received consistent protection against mob violence in the streets, and, if at times hesitantly, against insult and defamation in the courts. If neither side had obtained all it had hoped for in the emancipation "bargain," each had achieved at least a part of its objectives.<sup>65</sup>

The difference we can immediately detect in the passage that describes an identical case is that it is considered to be the result of negative developments, the partial fulfilment of a more encompassing "bargain" that initially assumed reciprocity and integration. Mosse succeeds to transcend the inherently static character of the social contract model by illustrating that it was transforming along with the changing circumstances.<sup>66</sup> When the project of the economic modernisation of the country was outlined in the Age of Reform in Hungary, it was not supposed to be carried out solely by Jews but primarily by the modernised gentry. This means that, if there was an initial contract, it had to be changed as a result of historical developments beyond the control of the political elite and the contract only acknowledged a pre-existing state of affairs.<sup>67</sup> In fact, although one of Karády's basic tenets is that the harmony between Jews and Hungarians was based on mutual economic interests from the very beginning, he often talks about the great advantage of Jews in coping with modernity and that

<sup>64</sup> Karády, 'Zsidó és nem zsidó polgárosodás?', *Budapesti Könyvszemle-BUKSZ*, p. 17.

<sup>65</sup> W. E. Mosse, 'From "Schutzjuden" to "Deutsche Staatsbürger jüdischen Glaubens"', in *Paths of Emancipation*, ed. Birnbaum and Katznelson, pp. 90-1.

<sup>66</sup> Thus, the problem with the terms of the contract was not only that they were unspoken and ambiguous but that the contract had various interpretations already at its birth and its terms changed over time. It is interesting that Mosse's focus on the antiliberal and anti-emancipatory context and the change of the terms of the contract greatly resembles what Bibó asserted about the interwar period in Hungary.

<sup>67</sup> Revealingly, the neo-conservative and agrarian movements had the construction of a "Christian economy" as a fundamental element of their program in the 1890s.



their success and growing influence created fear and anxiety among the gentry already in the Age of Reform.<sup>68</sup> The state of affairs described by the “social contract of assimilation” was more the result of spontaneous historical developments and, in a sense, reflects the failure rather than the success of the early modernisation plans.<sup>69</sup>

What exactly is the temporal frame of the contract? According to Karády, the contract was already offered at the end of the eighteenth century and many members of the intelligentsia, nobility and *Bürgertum* of the various nationalities accepted it. At that time the Jews were still excluded. The situation changed by the 1840s, from which time on the social contract refers to the relations between Hungarians and Jews, supposedly rejected by the nationalities involved in their own nation-building project. Interestingly, Karády himself asserts that after the failure to mobilise the gentry, the liberal nobility accepted the Jews as a partner only due to the lack of other available alternatives.<sup>70</sup> The nobility was aware of its weakness,<sup>71</sup> thus the contract grew out of necessity and was in fact a compromise and not the result of a conscious project as it is suggested by the theory. To the extent that the contract has its origins in the discourse of national liberalism, it reflects more a subsequent rationalisation than a concurrent description of the historical process itself.

According to Karády, with the disappearance of the mutuality and harmony behind the contract around the turn of the century, its ambivalences were revealed and resulted in overcompensation on the part of the Jews.<sup>72</sup> It became increasingly one-sided, forced rather than voluntary, and started to resemble a dictate. The contract even became a tool of chauvinism by the beginning of the twentieth century.<sup>73</sup> Yet he insists that it was still in effect in the interwar-period, as not the entirety of the contract, only its magyarisation “clause” was abrogated leaving the economic one *de facto* intact. We may ask at this point if it is meaningful to overstretch the concept and talk about a contract, if it is not based on mutual involvement and is so uneven. Even more so as Karády often emphasises the mutually beneficial nature of

68 Karády, ‘Antiszemitizmus, asszimiláció és zsidó identitás’, in Karády, *Önazonosítás, sorsválasztás*, p. 42.

69 According to Péter Hanák modernisation and social change in the nineteenth century was the result of spontaneous historical developments and not determined by a conscious political project. See P. Hanák, ‘Magyarország társadalmi a századforduló idején’, in *Magyarország története 1890–1918*, vol. 2, ed. P. Hanák and F. Mucsi (Budapest: Akadémiai Kiadó, 1983), pp. 403–515.

70 Karády, ‘Antiszemitizmus, asszimiláció és zsidó identitás’, in Karády, *Önazonosítás, sorsválasztás*, p. 44.

71 Karády, ‘Asszimiláció és társadalmi krízis’, in Karády, *Zsidóság, modernizáció, polgárosodás*, p. 120.

72 Karády, ‘Asszimiláció és társadalmi krízis’, in Karády, *Zsidóság, modernizáció, polgárosodás*, p. 121.

73 Karády, ‘Asszimiláció és társadalmi krízis’, in Karády, *Zsidóság, modernizáció, polgárosodás*, p. 120.

the “social contract” as one of its defining characteristics, and the fact that assimilation based on it was a two-way process.<sup>74</sup>

Peter Haber, although conveniently accepting the theory of Karády for the purposes of his own interpretation of the transformations of Jewish identity and the beginnings of Zionism in Hungary, asserts that the contract was altered by the turn of the century. The contract described by Haber was rather limited, both in terms of its temporal (only starting in the mid-nineteenth century) and social (made between narrow elites) scope. It was based on the interests of a ruling elite that needed the economic and cultural capital of the Jews. But the political influence of the groups initiating the contract diminished and the ensuing vacuum was filled by a new social group that had no such interests.<sup>75</sup> The magyarisation clause, however, was maintained even by them. Haber also describes contemporary debates about Hungarian Jewish identity within the Jewish community and attempts to demonstrate that even the Zionists argued in such a way as if there existed a real contract.<sup>76</sup> Haber’s argument is important insofar as it focuses on the “Jewish side” of the contract and does not treat the period of the Monarchy as a homogeneous block describing changes concerning the contract before the First World War.

As the contract is considered to have been unspoken, it is a question of interpretation when and whether it was changed, suspended or abrogated, which indicates the rather vague and speculative character of the concept. In fact, the *numerus clausus* law of 1920 or the Jewish laws of 1938, 1940 and 1941 can be considered as radical reformulations of the contract (as a dictate). In his latest book Karády extends the contract paradigm to the decades after 1945.<sup>77</sup> He introduces the concept of a “moral coalition” of the political elite determining the official attitude towards Jews. The social contract was formally renewed based on this “moral coalition,” which allowed for the existence of Jewish institutions, organisations, religious life and emigration as an option – at least until 1949. But the dominant groups of Hungarian politics believed that they have thus fulfilled their part of the “contract” without having to face the questions of restitution, responsibility or the necessity of coming to terms with the past.<sup>78</sup> After the communist takeover, writes Karády, “the state abrogated the virtual social contract characterised by the moral coalition. The basis of Stalinist politics in this respect became *forced assimilation*.”<sup>79</sup> Yet, in the

<sup>74</sup> See, for example, V. Karády, ‘Az asszimiláció Szegeden: szociológiai kérdésvázlat’, in V. Karády, *Zsidóság és társadalmi egyenlőtlenségek (1867–1945)* (Budapest: Replika kör, 2000), p. 60.

<sup>75</sup> P. Haber, *Die Anfänge des Zionismus in Ungarn (1867–1904)* (Köln, Weimar, Wien: Böhlau Verlag, 2001), pp. 133–9.

<sup>76</sup> Haber, *Die Anfänge des Zionismus*, p. 134.

<sup>77</sup> V. Karády, *Túlélők és újrakezdők: fejezetek a magyar zsidóság szociológiájából 1945 után* (Budapest: Múlt és Jövő, 2002).

<sup>78</sup> Karády, *Túlélők és újrakezdők*, p. 99.

<sup>79</sup> Karády, *Túlélők és újrakezdők*, p. 99.

end, he considers the communist regime as one that offered the ultimate completion of the social contract of assimilation – partially fulfilled in the nineteenth century and finally abrogated during the Second World War –, namely the full integration of the Jews into Hungarian society.<sup>80</sup> Understood like this, modern Hungarian Jewish history is the history of an unfulfilled contract.

Surveying the post-1989 literature on modern Hungarian Jewish history, we find that the concept of the social contract has a prominent position.<sup>81</sup> Both Ferenc Fejtő in his book of cultural and social history<sup>82</sup> and Vera Ránki in her sociological work<sup>83</sup> apply the concept of the social contract of assimilation following Karády. They basically retell the story of the Hungarian – Jewish “coexistence” utilising the Hungarian historical-sociological studies of the 1980s and 90s. Tamás Ungvári<sup>84</sup> and János Gyurgyák,<sup>85</sup> on the other hand, incorporate the findings of international historiography. Both engage in intellectual history and explore discourses about the “Jewish question.” Gyurgyák’s understanding of “the so called pact of assimilation between the Hungarian political elite and certain leaders of the Jewish community – which was not a special Hungarian invention but a general European solution” and the terms of which were continuously changed – fits into the tradition marked by Bibó, Schöpflin and Karády.<sup>86</sup> Even more so as he claims that it was the ideological construction of this “vague pact” or “compromise” worked out in the debates of the 1840s, 50s and 60s that led to the irreversible developments of the inter-war period.<sup>87</sup> Significantly, Gyurgyák also emphasises that it was a “pact” between the political elite and some leaders of the Jewish community and that Hungarian Jewry was far from being homogeneous. Ungvári is the

80 Karády, *Túlélők és újrakezdők*, p. 255.

81 It is noteworthy that most of the general surveys of the modern period published in the 1990s were written by historians of Hungarian-Jewish origin living outside Hungary. See, for example, L. Gonda, *A zsidóság Magyarországon, 1526–1945* (Budapest: Századvég, 1992); and R. Patai, *The Jews of Hungary: History, Culture, Psychology* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1996). (Gonda lived in Israel and Patai in the United States.)

82 F. Fejtő, *Magyarság, zsidóság* (Budapest: História, MTA Történettudományi Intézete, 2000), esp. pp. 97–8. It was first published in French, see F. Fejtő, *Hongrois et Juifs: Histoire millénaire d'un couple singulier (1000–1997)* (Paris: Éditions Ballands, 1997). (Fejtő lives in Paris.)

83 V. Ránki, *Magyarok, zsidók, nacionalizmus: a befogadás és kirekesztés politikája* (Budapest: Új Mandátum, 1999), esp. pp. 103–8. In English see V. Ránki, *The Politics of Inclusion and Exclusion: Jews and Nationalism in Hungary* (Sydney: Allen and Unwin, 1999). (Ránki lives in Australia.)

84 T. Ungvári, *Ahasvérus és Shylock: A „zsidókérdés” Magyarországon* (Budapest: Akadémiai Kiadó, 1999). For the English version see T. Ungvári, *The “Jewish Question” in Europe: The Case of Hungary* (Boulder, Colo.: Atlantic Research and Publications, Inc., Columbia University Press Social Science Monographs, 2000).

85 J. Gyurgyák, *A zsidókérdés Magyarországon: politikai eszmetörténet* (Budapest: Osiris, 2000).

86 Gyurgyák, *A zsidókérdés Magyarországon*, p. 212.

87 Gyurgyák, *A zsidókérdés Magyarországon*, p. 213.

only author who attempts to place the Hungarian case in the European context using the German Jewish experience as his reference point. He uses all the different understandings, levels and shades of the social contract, which is the fundamental conceptual thread running through the book. He considers emancipation to be a legal contract that even had secret clauses. He uses expressions like “emancipatory compact,” “pact of assimilation,” “unspoken contract,” “offer of assimilation,” “the pact like nature of assimilation,” or “tacit division of labour” frequently and interchangeably.<sup>88</sup>

Most advocates of the contract theory – as it is customary in Hungarian historiography – tend to talk about “Hungarian Jewry” as such; it is not clear who is actually involved in the “contract.” The theory cannot account for regional differences and excludes the Jews who did not integrate into Hungarian society or retained Yiddish or German as their primary language. It also treats Jews who did participate in Hungarian politics, were members of parliament and held state offices as untypical exceptions. The concept of the contract perpetuates the – in many respects misleading – dividing line between the Neolog and the Orthodox, with its focus on the Budapest Jewish community and some other major urban communities as a proxy for all Hungarian Jews.<sup>89</sup> It is also hard to fit Zionism and the articulation of new Jewish identities as a response to changing circumstances into the framework of the social contract, which can be interpreted as its abrogation by Jews. Importantly, there were Jews whose economic role was seen as unwelcome and harmful even by liberal politicians and the government. The Jewish innkeepers, shopkeepers and money-lenders of the north eastern counties were considered as contributing to the poverty and backwardness of the Hungarian and Ruthenian peasants.<sup>90</sup> According to the supposed contract the Jews were to increase the number of Hungarians by declaring Magyar as their mother tongue at the censuses. At the same time, even the liberals were obsessed with the restriction of Jewish immigration from the east, which – in effect – would have meant the limitation of the number of potential new Hungarians.<sup>91</sup>

88 Ungvári, Ahasvérus és Shylock, esp. pp. 42, 68, 77, 84, 85, 91, 156, 157, 329.

89 Although Karády acknowledges that the dividing line in terms of social integration, magyarization or economic contribution was not entirely along the Neolog-Orthodox divide and that there were considerable regional differences, this realization does not influence his theory of the social contract. See, for example, V. Karády, ‘A magyar zsidóság regionális és társadalmi rétegződéséről (1910)’, in V. Karády, *Zsidóság, modernizáció, polgárosodás: tanulmányok* (Budapest: Cserépfalvi, 1997), pp. 250–98. (Originally published in *Regio* in 1994.)

90 See, for example, the parliamentary debates of the so-called usury law in 1883 in *Az 1881–84. évi országgyűlés képviselőházának naplója*, vol. 7 and M. Bartha, *Kazár földön* (Kolozsvar: Az Ellenzék kiadóhivatala, 1901).

91 See, for example, L. Venetiáncr, *A magyar zsidóság története* (Budapest: Könyvértékesítő Vállalat, 1986 [1922]), pp. 246–7.

The terms and conditions of legal emancipation triggered conflicting views not only among the non-Jewish advocates of emancipation but also among Jews. The dividing line is not always and necessarily between Jews and non-Jews. While 1848 brought liberty and equality for most of the citizens of Hungary, Jewish emancipation was deferred and became one of the hotly debated issues. Two kinds of Jewish reactions were articulated by primarily politically active, urban individuals and organisations. The reform and magyarising societies promised religious reform and listed magyarising achievements, financial and military sacrifices. At the same time, there was a committee formed in Budapest and Pressburg to organise the emigration of Jews to America. The Budapest committee's announcement declares that while all the people of Europe live in the age of liberty, Hungarian Jews, who could enjoy the blessings of Enlightenment already for years, are persecuted and live in darkness again. There is only one condition for equality and freedom: reform. But, they assert, the principles of the Jewish religion are not in conflict with the interests of the state and its form should not be a basis for exclusion. All Jews, even the Orthodox, should become equal citizens in the age of liberty. So called reform should not be a condition for emancipation, as it would mean that thousands of their morally upright co-religionists would be put in the pillory. Conscience should not be forced! "And if we accepted the so called reform? Who would guarantee that they will not close the gate again and say that you should reform yourself socially too!? Can you hear brothers? Socially as well, which means that you have to become socially acceptable outside society first: don't come into the river before you can swim!"<sup>92</sup> Thus, not all Jews, even among the acculturated ones, accepted the terms of emancipation as offered at that time.

The conflicting views about Jews were also present all through the nineteenth century and were expressed with heightened intensity towards the end of the Dual Monarchy.<sup>93</sup> In 1882–83 – at the height of the period of the "liberal social contract" – the parliament and the press were constant scenes of heated debates on the "Jewish question" in connection with the fear of Jewish immigration from the east and the Tiszaeszlár blood libel case. The extent of Jewish assimilation, the role of the Jews in Hungarian society and politics, the character of Jewish collective identity (whether religious or ethnic), the necessity of religious reform and even the possible partial limitation of equal rights were among the issues discussed. Iván Simonyi, a self-proclaimed antisemite, said the following in parliament claiming that what he describes is based on statistical facts:

We are facing the fact that no other class is declining as rapidly as the landowning class, both the middle and the small landowners. It would be totally different

<sup>92</sup> Republished in 1848–49 a magyar zsidóság életében, ed. J. Zsoldos, pp. 132–6.

<sup>93</sup> See the survey of *Huszadik Század*, in *Zsidókérdés, asszimiláció, antiszemitizmus*, ed. Hanák, pp. 13–116.

if my son were Jewish. He would have inherited the spirit of business through his blood, so he would have the skills with which one can primarily succeed these days. [...] It is a problem that the people are impoverished in both the middle and lower classes. But it is an even greater problem that the Jews have social and even political influence.<sup>94</sup>

Thus, the honest Hungarian gentry is destroyed by the cunning Jews, who are also responsible for the ills of modernity.

Péter Busbach, supporting the governing Liberal Party, responded to the allegations of the antisemites in the following way:

Those bear a huge responsibility who try to incite hatred against a nationally loyal race [the Jews] in a country which is in need of increasing its national strength, a race that wants to assimilate itself to the dominant race with great fervour. [...] [A]lmost all of our commerce rests on their shoulders. It is sad but true that the Hungarian race has not expressed any affinity for trade, at least so far. Imagine the situation that the Jewish tradesmen leave the country. All businesses from the last village to Budapest would stagnate, would they not?<sup>95</sup>

Ottó Herman of the opposition, a liberal himself, criticised the antisemites and advocated the total assimilation of the Jews.<sup>96</sup> His speech was targeted against the Orthodox and eastern Jews, but he also addressed the most assimilated Jews:

[W]hat do we see in case of the more advanced Jew? That he abandons his brethren steeped in superstition and harmful traditions and aspires to be a baron or gentleman. He frequents the aristocratic casino [club], goes to the races and does not realise that he is only tolerated there but not accepted. And if this is not revealed to him face to face, it is expressed behind his back that he is not emancipated socially. [...] And no matter how the Jews dress and how much they follow Darwin's theory of mimicry, that is to make oneself similar to others, [the Jew] will be recognisable from every step, facial expression and thought.<sup>97</sup>

Whereas Busbach asserted that the Hungarian nation needs the Jews, who are appropriately magyarising, Herman claimed that the Jews should be grateful for emancipation and have further duties towards the state and the nation, including religious reform and not only outward but total assimilation, that is disappearance. Representing the stance of the government, Premier Kálmán Tisza insisted that the state expected the same from all of

94 *Az 1881–84. évi országgyűlés képviselőházának naplója*, vol. 7, pp. 277–9. (discussion on January 27, 1883.)

95 *Az 1881–84. évi országgyűlés képviselőházának naplója*, vol. 6, pp. 272–3. (discussion on June 9, 1882.)

96 *Az 1881–84. évi országgyűlés képviselőházának naplója*, vol. 7, p. 183. (discussion on January 23, 1883.)

97 *Az 1881–84. évi országgyűlés képviselőházának naplója*, vol. 7, p. 183.

its citizens, had universal legislation and did not require anything special from any race or religious denomination.<sup>98</sup>

The events and debates of 1882–83 – culminating in anti-Jewish atrocities – are especially informative in revealing the complexity of the web of social relations. The close reading of the public and political discourse of the time reveals that there is not only a complex relationship between political discourse and social relations,<sup>99</sup> but that there existed a diversity of positions, the sides were not clear-cut and there were many ambiguous utterances among the liberal supporters of assimilation.<sup>100</sup> The most striking aspect of contemporary discourse is that Jews were customarily referred to as a “race” even by people who insisted on the official denominational definition.<sup>101</sup> If we follow the logic of the “contract,” it was maintained by the government, suspended or altered by certain parts of the political elite and abrogated by the antisemites; the same can be said about the multiplicity of attitudes within society. When are political and social shifts radical enough that we can speak about the suspension or abrogation of the contract and the start of a new era?

Karády in his latest book – while keeping the “liberal social contract” as an ideal type – introduces the idea of a series of contracts repeatedly abrogated and renewed.<sup>102</sup> As opposed to the more idealising tone of his earlier works, he also emphasises that even the initial contract grew out of constraint and necessity.<sup>103</sup> He tries to make the concept more complex, accommodating and dynamic, yet he insists on the existence of a “social contract of assimilation” that structures Hungarian Jewish history. Furthermore, he suggests – along with Haber – that there was not only a series of “contracts,” but each contract was altered or partly abrogated within a given period. In fact, what are treated as different “clauses” of one single contract, are not necessarily connected and can function independently of each other. Thus, there existed not only a series of contracts, but multiple contracts at the same time. The concept of the “social contract of assimilation,” even if we consider it as a mere heuristic device, obscures and conceals rather than clarifies and reveals.

The debates of the 1880s are crucial in further respects. They demonstrate the persistence of the notions and arguments of the pre-emancipa-

98 *Az 1881–84. évi országgyűlés képviselőházának naplója*, vol. 7, p. 185.

99 For a stimulating discussion see T. van Rahden, ‘Words and Actions: Rethinking the Social History of German Antisemitism, Breslau, 1870–1914’, *German History*, vol. 18, no. 4 (2000), pp. 414–38.

100 The National Antisemitic Party, for example, founded in 1883, recruited its members from all over the political spectrum.

101 Jews as well as Hungarians were often called a race (*faj* or *népfaj*) in the nineteenth century, which was still mainly used in the sense of an ethnic or national group (similar to *Stamm* or *Volksstamm*) in the 1880s, although its modern racial meaning was gradually emerging at that time.

102 Karády, *Túlélők és újrakezdők*, p. 98.

103 Karády, ‘Az asszimiláció Szegeden’, in Karády, *Zsidóság és társadalmi egyenlőtlenségek*, p. 61.

tion debates, the meaning and connotations of which become radically different in the later historical context. The passages also reveal that all the elements of the interpretations of assimilation and modernisation offered by Szekfû and Bibó are not only rooted but were present in the political discourse of the age they wished to describe and understand with the scholarly apparatus of history and sociology.

## THE MYTH OF THE SOCIAL CONTRACT

The concept of a unique contract between Hungarians and Jews partly originates in nineteenth-century discourses about emancipation and assimilation and is partly a continuation of the – related – historical and sociological tradition of the interwar period. It entered the Hungarian historiographical vacuum created by the tabooing of anything Jewish by way of emigré scholars influenced by and contributing to western (Jewish) historiography. The familiarity of the argument, the sociological rigor it offered, and the lack of alternative conceptualisations lent Karády's theory a special significance and lasting influence.

The course of modern Hungarian Jewish history from the end of the eighteenth century up to today is generally characterised by the “social contract”: the existence or lack of a contract. The interpretative sophistication the contract theory allows for is the establishment of a duality: in the period of the Monarchy the positive official discourse and politics may disguise the existence of more negative social relations and tensions; whereas in the interwar period the negative official stance disguises more positive social relations. The concept reinforces the periodisation favoured in Hungarian historiography: the disconnected treatment of the pre- and post-World War I period as different eras separated by the rupture of the war, two revolutions and Trianon.

The contract is a reflection of reality for Karády, which was, in actual fact, renewed after 1989. But the formal framework, however, is hollow in itself and should be filled with content. A new kind of Jewish integration and the acceptance of differences will be successful, only if they become social and not only legal and institutional practice.<sup>104</sup> It is striking that – even if only with reference to today – Karády is himself critical of the formal character of the concept. In fact, the body of his work offers a much more nuanced interpretation of the historical process of assimilation than the theory of the “social contract of assimilation” would suggest. He describes assimilation as a complex, dynamic and ambivalent process,

<sup>104</sup> Karády, ‘Antiszemitizmus, asszimiláció és zsidó identitás’, in Karády, *Önazonosítás, sorsválasztás*, p. 76. This view contradicts Kőbányai, who insists that the contract has not been renewed, thus there is a lack of form to secure the emerging content: the emergence of new Jewish identities.



which surpasses the superimposed conceptual framework.<sup>105</sup> Why insist on the concept of the social contract then?

The Zionist historian Harry Sacher wrote in 1917: “This thesis is assuredly one of the most curious in the history of controversy, and it has implications far more extensive and complicated than those who employ it seem to have perceived.”<sup>106</sup> Sacher challenged the viability of what he called the “emancipation contract theory” as a basis for Jewish identity in his times.<sup>107</sup> He maintained that the granting of civic equality was a result of more general principles (like liberty and equality) and not connected to the repudiation of the national quality of Jewishness. Sacher’s major point in denying the existence of the contract was to be able to claim that Jewish national identity is perfectly compatible with good citizenship.<sup>108</sup> Interestingly, he raised the issue of the “theoretical difficulties of a divided loyalty” and concluded that the social contract is a sheer myth: “an invention devised with the desire to bolster up a political theory.”<sup>109</sup> Sacher’s pamphlet – advocating a political theory itself – demonstrates the politically and ideologically charged nature of the history of the concept. It is reinforced by Kőbányai’s appropriation of the term advocating the renewal of the – for him very concrete – contract at another historical crossroads, exactly in order to create a framework for the accommodation of divided loyalties and multiple identities.

The study of the history of the idea of the social contract reveals that the works that build on the concept today and use it as a neutral category interpret the nineteenth-century process of assimilation through a discourse that is a product of the very same historical period. The highly charged

105 See, for example, Karády, ‘Asszimiláció és társadalmi krízis’, in Karády, *Zsidóság, modernizáció, polgárosodás*, p. 114–16.; Karády, ‘Antiszemitizmus, asszimiláció és zsidó identitás’, in Karády, *Önazonosítás, sorsválasztás*, pp. 43–9; Karády, ‘Az asszimiláció Szegeden’, in Karády, *Zsidóság és társadalmi egyenlőtlenségek*, pp. 59–62.

106 Sacher, *Jewish Emancipation*, p. 2.

107 He claimed that the “emancipation contract myth,” according to which the gentile state and nation promised civic equality and the Jews promised to be solely a religious community and to abandon all national quality in return, was invented and propagated by the opponents of Zionism: those who deny the existence of the Jewish nation. The underlying paradox for him was that according to the inherent logic of the thesis, the Jews were granted emancipation either because of their Judaism or in spite of it. “The ‘Englishman of the Jewish persuasion,’” adds Sacher, “who interests himself actively in the *Alliance* or any similar institution comes into as direct a conflict with his own conception of English citizenship as does the Zionist” (Sacher, *Jewish Emancipation*, p. 9). He also studied the contract as a matter of historical fact and came to the conclusion that there is no historical evidence to assume the existence of a contract, not even of a tacit agreement, in the USA, Germany, France, Austria–Hungary or Britain. According to Sacher, emancipation was nowhere given as a part of a bargain and it is unhistorical to assume the existence of a contract in all countries where the Jews were emancipated.

108 He maintained that the war demonstrated that each nationality should be given freedom “instead of endeavouring by tyranny to make the state coterminous with the nation and the nation coterminous with the state.” See, Sacher, *Jewish Emancipation*, p. 23.

109 Sacher, *Jewish Emancipation*, p. 16.

character of the term is further complicated by the existence of an intermediary discourse (see Szekfű, Bibó and Erdei) that internalised the contemporary political discourse of assimilation and transformed it into an influential historical-sociological language. The “social contract of assimilation” is an ambiguous ideological construct that has a dual – liberal and antisemitic – lineage. The ambiguity of the term is further accentuated by an underlying conceptual tension, which also contributes to its appeal. While it is real, concrete and formal with well articulated “clauses,” it is also rather vague: partly informal, tacit with unspoken appendices. The lasting appeal of the concept lies exactly in the fact that it effectively combines myth and history, past and present, which also explains the striking absence of any reflexivity concerning the ideological and political origins of the concept.

Despite the ideological origins of the contract theory, the evidence for its existence is mainly based on socio-economic facts through the application of a reverse logic. There was a contract, because Jews did play such a significant cultural, economic and demographic role.<sup>110</sup> This argumentation makes sense, only if we assume that it was a deviance from (eastern or western) European trends; it was not “normal” in the given geographical and cultural location, thus there has to be a special reason behind it. It suggests that without the very pragmatic economic and national interests of a narrow elite, there would have existed exclusion, discrimination and antisemitism – even on the part of that very elite. On the other hand, the concept suggests that the assimilation and loyalty of Jews (to the Hungarians rather than the Habsburgs) was also not “normal” and would not have happened without the advantages offered by the contract. It is imperative, thus, to view the Hungarian case in the wider context of central European history and test the social contract theory – especially its emphasis on interests and conscious actions – in a comparative perspective.

The concept of the social contract is mostly concerned with modernisation and its relatedness to assimilation,<sup>111</sup> building on historical discourses on the social and economic role of the Jews reinforced by general statistical data. An unintended consequence of this approach is that it contributes to the rationalisation of resentment, intolerance and antisemitism within Hungarian society as understandable reactions to actual socioeconomic circumstances. There are two promising ways to surpass the apparent cul-de-sac of the persistent social contract myth. The first one is the study of culture and ideology: the transformations of the understanding of

110 See, for example, Haber, *Die Anfänge des Zionismus*, pp. 135–9.

111 Modernization is the central problem for Karády and he does problematise the concept and its controversial nature along with assimilation. See, for example, V. Karády, ‘Zsidóság és modernizáció a történeti Magyarországon’, in V. Karády, *Zsidóság és társadalmi egyenlőtlenségek (1867–1945)* (Budapest: Replika kör, 2000), pp. 7–38. (Originally published in 1995.) Karády uses the concept of the social contract to back up his understanding and interpretation of assimilation and modernization in Hungary.

Hungarian nationhood and the definition of national identity, which would also reveal the historicity of the idea of the social contract.<sup>112</sup> The other – complementary – approach is the focus on locality: the in-depth study of social, economic and institutional relations in a given region, town or village, which would reveal the complex relationship between the politics and the realities of assimilation.<sup>113</sup>

112 For a groundbreaking essay in this respect see M. Szabó, 'A nemzetfogalom változása és a magyar társadalom modernizációja,' in *Változás és állandóság: Tanulmányok a magyar polgári társadalomról*, ed. E. Karátson and P. Várdy (n. p.: Hollandiai Mikes Kelemen Kör, 1989), esp. pp. 113–20.

113 For such a work, which challenges much of the accepted wisdom about antisemitism and Jewish–gentile relations in Germany, see T. van Rahden, *Juden und andere Breslauer: Die Beziehungen zwischen Juden, Protestanten und Katholiken in einer deutschen Großstadt von 1860 bis 1925* (Göttingen: Vanderhoeck & Ruprecht, 2000).