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COLLECTIVISATION AND DECOLLECTIVISATION IN HUNGARY.

HISTORICAL PROBLEMS OF LANDED PROPERTY DURING THE POLITICAL DICTATORSHIP

In the authors' contention the category of (landed) property includes values, social-cultural meanings and social and political power relationships. Privately owned farms were eliminated in Soviet type regimes by the means of state intervention and terror since they obstructed a program of forced industrialisation and exercising power. Collectivisation became a staggering, collective event of social history that transformed structures. The practice of eliminating private farms resulted in many respects in a particular dynamics and an independent process with its own internal logic. Subsequently, this laid the foundations for the Hungarian model of agriculture where the insistence on land was replaced by concerns for earning in cash. These conditions determined the atmosphere of decollectivisation, as well. Those persons compensated who after 1992 obtained actual landed property, were unable or unwilling to work in agriculture since they were uncertain of their skills or the profitability of production in the conditions of the new market economy.

***Keywords**: landed property, communist agricultural policy, collectivisation, decollectivisation, social practice.*

APPROACHES TO THE TOPIC

The most crucial aspect of the postwar history of East European countries was the process of Sovietization.[1] State interventions related to this transformation aimed at the destruction of previous property

[1] Rees, E.A., *The Sovietization of Eastern Europe*, [in:] Apor Balázs, Apor Péter, Rees E.A. (Eds), *The Sovietization of Eastern Europe. New Perspectives on the Postwar Period*, New Academia Publishing, Washington, DC, 2008, pp. 1–27; Trencsényi Balázs, Apor Péter, *Fine-Tuning the Polyphonic Past: Hungarian Historical Writing in the 1990s*, [in:] Antohi Sorin, Trencsényi Balázs, Apor Péter (Eds.), [in:] *Narratives Unbound. Historical Studies in Post-Communist Eastern Europe*, CEU, Budapest, 2007, pp. 1–99.

relationships. The ownership and use of goods and objects were an extremely important, existential issue both according to contemporary experiences and in post-communist perspective. This statement is particularly adequate concerning those once mostly rural-agrarian societies, which in general are to be found within the frontiers of the former Soviet Bloc. It is, hence, even more striking that current scholarship pays relatively little attention to this issue.[2]

In Hungary, according to the Stalinist model of Sovietization, land distribution was accomplished in 1945, followed by the gradual nationalization of industrial plants, and finally, parallel to the speeding up of industrial investment, the forced collectivisation of individual peasant farms was launched. The essay addresses this last question, thus agriculture, focusing on the social history and sociology of landed property.[3] First, it explains the use of basic concepts of property, landed property and collectivisation.

The term *property* is not confined to its narrower legal meaning, but is used in a broader context.[4] Contemporary "socialist civil code," while it maintained the unity of property rights, established various artificial distinctions. Property objects, thus, included consumer goods for personal use and the means of production which was almost exclusively owned by the state or "collectively." The subject of property embraced state, collective, personal and private property forms. According to

[2] The generally very sophisticated Western European social histories of the region barely address this question. Fulbrook Mary (Ed.), *Europe since 1945*, Oxford University Press, 2001; Kaelble Hartmut, *Sozialgeschichte Europas 1945 bis zur Gegenwart*, Beck, München, 2007. This situation is to be changed by the publication of the collective volume *The Collectivisation of Agriculture in Communist Eastern Europe: Comparison and Entanglements from the 1930s to the 1980s* based on conferences in Budapest and Berlin. A comprehensive monograph more sensitive to the rural population is Tomka Béla, *Európa társadalomtörténete a 20. században*, Osiris, Budapest, 2009, pp. 179–181.

[3] On eastern European rural societies: Granberg Leo, Kovách Imre, Tovey Hillary (Eds), *Europe's Green Ring*, Ashgate, Aldershot et al., 2001. On Hungarian aspects: Valuch Tibor, *Magyarország társadalomtörténete a XX. század második felében*, Osiris, Budapest, 2001, pp. 188–212; Varga Zsuzsanna, *Az agrárium 1945-től napjainkig*, [in:] Estók János et al. (Eds.), *Agrárvilág Magyarországon 1848–2002*, Agumentum, Budapest, 2003, pp. 261–339; Kovács Teréz, *A paraszti gazdálkodás és társadalom átalakulása*, L'Harmattan, Budapest, 2010.

[4] In sovietized dictatorships, the appropriation of public services and goods as private property, namely the state control of accumulation resulted in the predominance of personal, patronized political capital and culture. Bourdieu Pierre, *A „szovjet" változat és a politikai tőke*, [in:] Bourdieu Pierre, *A gyakorlati észjárás. A társadalmi cselekvés elméletéről*, Napvilág, Budapest, 2002, p. 27. See also Tanka Endre, *Föld és elsajátítás. Sorskérdések földviszonyaink múltjában és jelenében*, Budapest, é. n.; Burgerné Gimes Anna, *A mezőgazdasági földtulajdon és földbérlet*, Akadémiai, Budapest, 2002.

Soviet terminology, contemporary politics was called state property as social or people's property; nonetheless, this did not mean that citizens had actual ownership rights. State ownership in this case meant the actual disposal of property. Legal concepts of the party state minimalized personal property preferring the idea of distribution according to work. Regulation was based not on the individual, but on families living in one household. Private property was allowed to a limited extent in small artisan workshops, trade and agricultural farms, only in cases if the owners personally worked as well.[5]

Max Weber's classical sociological statement which identifies property as "appropriated advantages" is an important conceptual stimulus for this study. He calls appropriated advantages as "rights." He also notes that "not only concrete goods but also social and economic opportunities of all kinds were the object of appropriation."[6] Considering these arguments, this essay also claims that rural societies managed to preserve certain opportunities for land usage despite the forced nationalisation measures of the political dictatorship.

The primary officially approved form of independent land usage was household farming.[7] Regarding this, this study interprets property most of all as a form of social relationships. For contemporaries, landed property thoroughly determined society, forms of coexistence like family, kinship, village community and affected peasant youth moved to urban centres or industry. The staggering impact of Soviet-type state violence enhanced the long term significance of the categories of property. This development was spectacular during the process of decollectivisation.[8] Considering previous dispossession and its subsequent restitution, the concept of (landed) property arguably contains at the same time social-cultural values and meanings as well as social and political relationships.[9]

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[5] Mezey Barna (Ed.), *Magyar jogtörténet*, Osiris, Budapest, 1996, pp. 197–200.

[6] Weber Max, *Economy and Society: An Outline of Interpretive Sociology*, Berkeley: University of California Press 1978, pp. 44, 343.

[7] Siegrist Hannes, Sugarmann David (Ed), *Eigentum im Vergleich internationalen Vergleich (18–20. Jahrhundert)*, Vandenhoeck/Ruprecht, Göttingen, 1999, p. 11; Thelen Tatjana, *Privatisierung und soziale Ungleichheit in der osteuropäischen Landwirtschaft. Zwei Fallstudien aus Ungarn und Rumänien*, Campus, Frankfurt am Main, New York, 2003, p. 16; Therborn Göran, *European Modernity and Beyond. The Trajectory of European Societies, 1945–2000*, SAGE Publication, Thousand Oaks, New Delhi, 1995, p. 112.

[8] Thelen Tatjana, *Privatisierung...*, p. 276.

[9] Verdery Katherine, *The Vanishing Hectare: Property and Value in Postsocialist Transylvania*, Cornell University, 2003, pp. 15–18.

The next important concept is collectivisation. The Hungarian political system during the period of collectivisation was a dictatorial model in which state power was multiplied and completed by forced social mobilization. From this perspective, collectivisation was a fundamental conflict of Soviet type dictatorships. It was a series of events initiating radical changes that is ordinarily neglected both by social self-reflection and scholarship. From the broader current perspective, it is fruitful to interpret collectivisation both in a broader and narrower meaning. The first, ordinary, understanding reflects the elimination of individual farms and the establishment of collective ones by the intervention of the party into rural societies and the "collection" of land and equipment. Since this term excludes human beings, the ultimate cause of historical research, it is important to articulate collectivisation in a broader meaning as well. Collectivisation resulted in both the vertical and horizontal re-structuring of peasant and village societies. The themes of this essay, thus, move beyond the narrow confines of the history of agriculture, peasantry or villages. Collectivisation in this broader meaning became at the same time a rural and urban phenomenon due to its impacts and ways of implementation.[10]

The essay, therefore, seeks answers to the following questions. What happened with landed property in the framework of Sovietization? What kind of contemporary reactions and social practices were present in land usage? What sort of "new knowledge", skills, experience did the "socialist" system mean to induce in society?[11] Rule and society, however, are not in opposition or in hierarchy.[12] Those everyday forms, practices and relationships that agents appropriate to comprehend and shape their own realities are considerably more important.

THE 1945 LAND REFORM AND COMMUNIST AGRICULTURAL POLICY

In Hungary, almost half of the entire landed property used to be owned by members of the former noble classes during the interwar period. Their dominance was juxtaposed by the almost 2 million agricultural

[10] Kovács József Ö., *"Sűrített népnevelő". A kollektivizálás tapasztalattörténetei (1958–1959)*, Korall, no 36, July 2009, pp. 31–54.

[11] There were many differences in terms of geography, time, generation, education, occupation and localities.

[12] Lindenberger Thomas, *Die Diktatur der Grenzen*, [in:] Lindenberger Thomas (Ed.), *Herrschaft und Eigen-Sinn in der Diktatur. Studien zur Gesellschaftsgeschichte der DDR*, Böhlau, Köln, pp. 19–31.

wage labourers who possessed, if any land, half an acre.[13] The class of 1.1 million genuine propertied peasants occupied a middle position in between of the two extreme social groups. Peasant populist authors, intellectuals and a few political parties had urged a modification of property structure already in between the two wars; however, no land reform was introduced before 1945.[14]

Following the advance of the Red Army, the Provisional National Government was established in Hungary, which prepared a profound land reform act (18 March 1945). The distribution of landed property according to this measure proved to be extraordinarily radical. Both gentry property between 100–1000 acres and peasant property over 200 acres were appropriated by the government. However, the entire territories of capitalist enterprises, industrial and financial interest companies as well as properties of the former aristocracy over 1000 acres were nationalised. A total of 5.6 million acres were appropriated which accounted for 34.6% of all agricultural land in the country. Nevertheless, only 3.3 million acres were distributed, or one fifth of all agricultural land. The remaining proportion of nationalised landed property was used chiefly for the purpose of state farms. Those who were qualified to obtain property were required to register with local land demand committees, which normally allocated the land in days or in a few weeks after confirming the grounds of the claims. According to the decision of the Hungarian Communist Party, land demand committees had been already established in February behind the frontlines and had begun to distribute land even before the proclamation of the order of the government, which frequently led to improper conduct and illegal decisions. The land reform resulted in 650,000 new owners obtaining an average of 5.1 acres of land.[15]

Those who obtained new property were demanded to pay one quarter of the ordinary purchase price which equalled approximately five years of land lease. This was the board-wage, which former landless persons had to pay in 20 years; small and dwarf-holders, in turn, had 10 years instalments. This obligation meant debts only for the state. The contemporary state, however, contrary to legal regulations failed to compensate previous land-owners then and later, in 1948, the issue of compensation ceased at once to be part of the political agenda.

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[13] 1 acre = 0.57 hectare.

[14] Kovács Teréz, *A paraszti...*, pp. 86–105.

[15] Szakács Sándor, *A földreformtól a kollektivizálásig 1945–1956*, [in:] Gunst Péter (Ed.), *A magyar agrártársadalom a jobbágyság felszabadulásától napjainkig*, Napvilág, Budapest, 1998, pp. 287–295; Valuch Tibor, *Magyarország...*, pp. 189–200.

The land reform modified property structure radically. The method of middle-peasant farming based upon family workforce became crucial (Table 1). This brought about a new situation since the proportion of propertied persons among the population living on agriculture increased to an extent never seen before.

Table 1. The structure of landed property in Hungary in the early 1949

Size of farms	Number of farms	Proportion in percentage
0 - 1 acre	185,333	13.2
1 - 3	305,384	21.8
3 - 5	255,825	18.3
5 - 10	385,655	27.6
10 - 15	150,448	10.7
15 - 20	52,578	3.8
20 - 25	26,589	1.9
25 - 35	21,215	1.5
35 - 50	9,899	0.7
50 - 100	5,361	0.4
More than 100 acres	759	0.1
Total	1,399,046	100.0

Source: 1949. évi népszámlálás, 3. Részletes mezőgazdasági eredmények [1949 Census. 3. detailed agricultural survey], KSH [Central Office of Statistics], Budapest, 1950, p. IX.

The land reform partly provided historical compensation for Hungarian peasantry; however, it also became a means of taking revenge on traditional elites.[16] As a consequence, middle-sized farms most capable of modernisation were divided significantly hindering the process of creating a modern middle-class in Hungary. Agricultural machinery and equipment held by middle-sized and large landowners were, to a great extent, inoperable. The advantage of the land reform was, nonetheless, that it managed to dismantle the unjust structure of landed property favouring great estates and landowners based upon allegedly historical rights, and radically decreased the proportion of landless agricultural wage-earners and poor peasants.

In a historical perspective, the problem of landed property is described in ambiguous terms. To the extent the longing for land by the

[16] Buday-Sántha Attila, *Agrárpolitika — Vidékpolitika*, Dialóg Campus, Budapest–Pécs, p. 73.

peasantry proved to be decisive in 1945, the possession of property became troublesome to the same extent a few years later as a consequence of the socially disadvantaged status of rural society in general and the forced collectivisation launched in 1948. The peculiar rationality of the control mechanisms of village societies was considerably transformed, which the authorities attempted to replace by various phases of party and agricultural policies.

During the collectivisation campaign, the primary goal of everyday propaganda was to destroy relationships that were associated to landed property. The communist party proclaimed the increase of living standards, rational workforce planning, the modernisation of future big agricultural estates and new social welfare policies.[17] However, the other side of communist party propaganda was the intimidation of the village population. Propaganda emphasized that the "capitalist way" equalled the way of the kulaks turned into class enemies, which would lead to the poverty of "working peasantry." In early 1949, this content was articulated as "the power of wealth has faded away."[18]

These manifest and hidden aims and offers did not equal the means of actual state intervention: the harsh system of taxes in money and in kind, the listing of kulaks, the forced rearrangement of plots and the persecution of the clerical personnel.

First of all, an ever changing system of taxes in money and in kind was introduced.[19] Similar to wartime conditions, obligatory produce supply was continued in May 1945. The rate of mandatory quantities grew progressively according to the size of farms. Concerning the increase of this burden, the limit of 25 acres proved to be very important. These measures successfully limited the peasants' autonomy and capacity of ownership.

Secondly, the most unfair aspect of this policy against the peasantry was the introduction of listing and registering the "kulaks" (in 1948–49). Possessing 25 acres (vineyard and orchard were multiplied by 4 or 5 times), employing extra-family labour, using bigger types of machinery (e.g., threshers), or income beyond personal labour qualified anyone as a "kulak." 71,603 "kulak" farms were registered, however only 13,000,

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[17] Habuda Miklós et al. (Ed.), *A Magyar Dolgozók Pártja határozatai 1948–1956*, Napvilág, Budapest, 1998, pp. 26–27, 55–65.

[18] Kovács József Ö., *A kollektivizálási kampány "szocreál" kontextusai Magyarországon*, Aetas, no 4/2009, pp. 32–46.

[19] Erdmann Gyula, *Begyűjtés, beszolgáltatás Magyarországon 1945–1956*, Tevan, Gyula 1992, pp. 67–75, 77–83.

18% of all listed families, owned more than 24 acres; whereas 22,000 "kulaks" had no land at all. The listing of "kulaks," thus, became a means of intimidation and elimination.[20] The authorities aimed at identifying one or two "kulaks" in every village. If there was no real peasant meeting these criteria, usually a middle peasant or other member of the middle classes was nominated a "kulak." These people were economically broken, mentally humiliated and were coerced to "offer" their houses, economic buildings, land and live stock to the state. Many of them, mainly those living in southern and western border territories were deported to the deserted area of the Hortobágy, where they were housed in sheep hutches, suffering inhumane conditions.[21] The purpose of these many hundred-thousand criminal procedures was to induce the image of the enemy and to destroy previous social milieus.

Thirdly, the nationalisation and forced rearrangements of agricultural plots radically transformed the previous structure of the division in property. During the assignment of plots to be re-arranged, the role of the communist party proved to be crucial. The registering of property, which was meant to be first step of the forced rearrangements, was defined chiefly a party duty and only to a lesser extent a professional task.[22] The forced rearrangements literally jumbled the previous peasant property structure and effectively deprived the class of well-to-do peasants of its land. The annual campaigns, occurred twice in a year in half of the villages, elsewhere even more times, resulted in the rearrangement of 4 million acres of land in 2280 villages (70% of all rural settlements) between the autumn of 1949 and 1953. The forced, usually disadvantageous, exchange of plots was unacceptable for many. The consequences of this disastrous state policy included the "offering" of landed property to the state,[23] migration out of the villages, and the lack of workforce in the countryside.

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[20] Kávási Klára, *Kuláklista*, Agóra, Budapest, 1991; Varga Zsuzsanna, *"Kényszeríteni kell a parasztot..." (Hatalom és agrártársadalom az 1950-es években)*, [in:] Szederjesi Cecília (Ed.), *Megtorlások évszázada. Politikai terror és erőszak a huszadik századi Magyarországon*, NML, etc., Salgótarján–Budapest, 2008, pp. 53–65.

[21] Hantó Zsuzsa et al. (Ed.), *Kitaszítottak I. "Magukkal fogjuk megzsírozni a földet"*, Alterra, Budapest, 2001; Füzes Miklós (Ed.), *Kitaszítottak II. Dokumentumok a hortobágyi zárt munkatáborokról, 1950–1960*, Alterra, Budapest, 2002.

[22] Magyar Országos Levéltár (National Archives of Hungary, hereafter MOL), M-KS-276. 93, 115. őe. 27 August 1949.

[23] By the means of these "offerings" 5.1 million acres moved to the state, most of which the collective farms were unable to cultivate. Honvári János, *Magyarország gazdasági fejlődése a II. világháború után (1945–1958)*, [in:] Honvári János (Ed.), *Magyarország gazdaságtörténete a honfoglalástól a 20. század közepéig*, Aula, Budapest, 1997, p. 529.

There was a fourth implication which has remained largely unexplored in current scholarship. Apart from physical violence and terror, the staggering effects of communist agricultural policies on village societies were significantly enhanced by the concerted persecution of the Church and religious behaviour in general.[24] The program of Sovietizing and "occupying" the village, in reality, was begun by the forced nationalization of Church schools in 1948.[25]

SOCIAL PRACTICES OF COLLECTIVISATION

Soviet type campaigns of collectivisation had more stages in Hungary. During the first phase, begun in the autumn of 1948, it was possible to appropriate land leases bigger than 25 acres to form collective farms based on a government decree. These cooperatives recruited their membership from peasants excluded from the land reform in 1945, former prisoners-of-war returning home as well as other poor agricultural workers. For instance, in Eastern Hungary territories were frequently taken arbitrarily or by the help of state violence.[26] At the end of 1949, 98.5% of all members were former agricultural proletarians. A year later, 59% of the territory and 65% of the assets of these cooperatives came from state subsidies, investment or credits.[27] The first phase of collectivisation resulted in an economic failure; their production rate remained far behind those of individual producers. This policy stopped by the establishment of the Imre Nagy government in July 1953, when 20.3% of all the agricultural areas were in the possession of cooperatives. Imre Nagy during his short period as Prime Minister made significant steps to ease the situation of the peasantry like the elimination of listing of "kulaks," interments and obligatory produce submissions. However, following the marginalisation of Imre Nagy in 1955, the authorities returned to the Stalinist way of forced collectivisation, which was ended by the revolution in 1956.

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[24] Habuda Miklós, *A Magyar...*, pp. 164–166; Bögre Zsuzsanna, *Az egyház és a civil társadalom szerepe a falusi térségekben*, [in:] Kovács Teréz (Ed.), *Integrált vidékfejlesztés. V. Falukonferencia*, MTA RKK, 2000, pp. 288–296.

[25] On the confusion and distancing of roles, selves and the aspects of negative identity see Goffman Erving, *Role Distance*, [in:] *Encounters*, The Bobbs-Merrill Company, New York, 1961, pp. 74–134; Bögre Zsuzsanna, *Vallásosság és identitás. Élettörténetek a diktatúrában (1948–1964)*, Dialóg Campus, Budapest–Pécs, 2004.

[26] MOL, M-KS-276. 93, 147.őe. p. 44. 25 March 1949.

[27] By December 31 1950, 2185 collective farms were registered, almost all of them (2149) were type 3, namely the least "collective." Honvári János, *Magyarország...*, pp. 525–526.

During the revolution, mainly members, who had no landed property, or previous manor servants stayed within the collective farms. Once again, it was the land that proved to be the cornerstone of peasant life.[28] János Kádár in his first speech in government condemned every incorrect agricultural decision and promised a bright future for peasants.

Despite the suppression of the revolution in 1956, before the accomplishment of profound collectivisation three quarters of rural society worked in individual farms. The majority of peasantry insisted on possessing the land then. The relevant question, hence, is how the radical turn in agriculture and dispossession occurred.

In 1958, the Hungarian communist leadership in harmony with instructions learned in a Moscow meeting defined the goals of collectivisation to be achieved by 1965. There were two different concepts of collectivisation within the party in 1958. The first one planned to schedule the process of collectivisation according to the speed of state authorities in securing material means of large scale production for cooperatives. The ideal of this group was to extend the collective sector into the 60–65% of all arable land by 1965. An inherent aspect of this plan was the preservation of individual production to a certain level. The other concept aimed at accelerating the process of collectivisation and its final accomplishment in one or two years. Eventually, the party leadership accepted the second plan.[29]

The last, total phase of collectivisation occurred between December 1958 and 31 March 1961, meanwhile agitators collected 1.2 million entrance declarations by the end of the campaign. By the accomplishment of the total collectivisation "socialist large scale farms," the system of state and collective farms occupied 96% of all arable land. As a consequence of collectivisation campaigns 75% of agricultural workers became members of collective farms, while the others worked for state farms or in other shared ownership types of agricultural farms.[30]

The events of dispossession between 1958 and 1961 determined the patterns of behaviour subsequent to the collectivisation process. The terror of forced collectivisation included the following massively recurrent ways and methods:[31]

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[28] Romány Pál, *Az Agrárpolitikai Tézisektől a Nemzeti Agrárprogramig 1957–1997*, [in:] Gunst Péter (Ed.), *A magyar agrártársadalom a jobbágyság felszabadításától napjainkig*, Napvilág, Budapest, 1998, pp. 345–437.

[29] Kovács József Ö., *"Sűrített"*..., pp. 35–36.

[30] Valuch Tibor, *Magyarország*..., p. 199; Kovács Teréz, *A paraszti*..., pp. 128–132.

[31] Kovács József Ö., *„Ekkora gyűlölet még nem volt a falunkban, mint most." Szövegek és kommentárok az erőszakos kollektivizálás befejező hullámáról*, Századvég, no 1/2008, pp. 37–69.

1. Verbal psychological pressure, intimidation through public threatening, agitating from "Soviet officer," "policeman," "public prosecutor," commanding the signature of entrance declaration after mass alignment, forcing juniors to sign the declaration, pretending to house search, cutting the tail of horses, truculence, looting.

2. Administrative measures like summoning to prosecution, withholding employment cards, firing relatives from employment, enlisting to the army, excluding children from public nursery.

3. Physical coercion, beating, torturing, transporting peasants living in homesteads for torturing in far-away places, police investigation, night raids by police, workers' guard, armed civilians, party cadres or other "people's educators," armed persecution, shooting, forcing someone to stand on one leg by the wall with a pencil in between the forehead and the wall, treading on feet, kicking, pulling hair and ears, beating one's head into the wall or table, twisting the nose or sexual organs, using boxer or truncheon, making people run in winter coats then sweat by the stove, walking around a coin on the floor with a finger on it, beating and whipping the "candidate" and his relatives, humiliating women, tearing off their clothes, threatening wives at gunpoint meanwhile beating husbands, beating legs with rubber tube, forcing people to collect cinder with bare hands.

The assumption that the masses were only passive actors cannot be verified either theoretically or empirically. Official reports described the occasional mass protests as "women's demonstrations." Individual forms of protesting accompanied the entire history of the collectivisation. Rarely did organised resistance and violence take place: there is evidence of cases when hand grenades were thrown into village halls. There are hints in the documents that farmers and their relatives "were taken ill" by constant harassment, some jumped into a well or committed suicide, although the authorities consistently tried to erase these references.[32]

Both perpetrators and victims (who sometimes changed place) attempted to suppress the burdening memory of brutalities. The majority of contemporaries reacted according to the expected rationality and turned a blind eye.

The purpose during the collectivisation campaign was to force peasants to sign the declaration, which the actual dispossession succeeded only later. The procedure of "land arrangements" conducted by local administrations can be described as a new type of "land distributions by

[32] MOL XIX-B-14. ORFK 387.d. 28 January 1961.

Soviets."[33] The recurrent statement of contemporary prosecution reports was that party decrees and legal forms were regularly ignored in all the counties. The borders of large scale cooperatives were established by various administrative measures, with psychological and physical pressure. The appropriation of landed property officially was termed "land offer." Local administration, in general, was unable to follow the actual ownership of individual plots. Contemporary official prosecution reports simply recorded the reasons of "ownership change" and "land offer." The historian can simply list these in a different order to provide a tangible description of the motivations of those abandoning their land: violent agitation, industrial employment, large distance between land and home, being unable to work due to age or illness.[34] The authorities attempted to substitute the spectacular lack of workforce generated by the accomplishment of collectivisation by mobilizing the army in addition to involving relatives and children. Most of arable land had been already collectivised; however, there remained fewer and fewer skilled workers to cultivate.

AFTER COLLECTIVISATION

Subsequent to the accomplishment of collectivisation, peasants in general had no personal attachment to the cooperatives; usually it was said that the farms belonged to the state and not to the people. Normally, members were reluctant to work hard or to work at all. Duties of members were measured not in cash, but in work units and its value in currency was counted afterwards according to the actual income of products during the early 1960s. As a consequence, peasants were reluctant to work in the collective farms since they understood no use in doing this. The last individual farmers tried to keep their valuables and livestock in good shape at home. The fact that this period saw the greatest number of livestock bred by individual farms demonstrates the impact of these patterns of behaviour and structures of agricultural production (Table 2).

Troubles with public supply triggered by collectivisation contributed to the passing of an act guaranteeing one acre of household land from the common property for those who did not bring any when joining the cooperative. Obviously, this regulation caused further conflicts with members previously possessing land.

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[33] MOL M-KS-288. 28.1959. 9.őe. pp. 104–109. 17 August 1959.

[34] MOL M-KS-288. 28.1959. 9.őe. pp. 111–119. 27 May 1959.

Table 2. The development of livestock in livestock units*, according to forms of production, based on springtime livestock registers (1958–1968)

Year	State farms	Collective farms		Individual and other farms	Total
		Common property	Household property		
		Economic			
1958	313 608	155 814	78 170	2 307 489	2 855 081
1959	313 325	298 245	321 849	2 076 541	3 009 960
1960	324 140	695 262	916 434	875 418	2 811 254
1961	347 774	937 872	1 043 767	421 766	2 751 179
1962	368 711	1 066 312	956 269	386 797	2 778 089
1963	362 942	1 094 325	805 722	325 205	2 588 194
1964	374 561	1 107 135	836 508	352 387	2 670 591
1965	374 723	1 170 511	884 579	..	..
1966	358 003	1 165 328	792 132	353 560	2 669 023
1967	352 544	1 152 282	825 854	388 196	2 718 876
1968	372 654	1 239 541	823 195	427 322	2 862 712

* 1 livestock unit = 500 kg

Source: Pető Iván, Szakács Sándor, *A hazai gazdaság négy évtizedének története. 1945–1985.* I. KJK, Budapest, 1985, p. 472.

In legal terms, peasants who were forced to join the collective farms did not lose their landed property: formally it meant the giving up of their right of disposal. This was still a major change; therefore the state party passed two significant acts, which continued to have long term effects on the actors of agriculture. The first, Act no. 3/1967 addressed agricultural cooperative farms. This one established the general assembly as the major corporate body of the cooperative farms, formed by the totality of members, which elected its leadership every four years. Agricultural cooperatives, thus, benefited from greater autonomy than other companies in different branches of the economy. The act, however, allowed cooperatives to process their products, provide economic services, pursue construction works and even sell their goods. Units dealing with these activities became sideline branches of cooperatives.[35]

The second Act, no. 4/1967, on the improvement of landed property and land use, addressed the establishment of cooperative property. Whereas, the previous act obliged members of cooperatives to bring their

[35] Kovács Teréz, *A paraszti...*, pp. 134–135.

own property into the cooperative as well as those of other members living in common household, Act no. 4 ordered cooperatives to redeem the land of persons having no membership relation with them (so-called externals). Henceforth, property of those who left the cooperatives, or if their heirs were not cooperative members, was bought and became the legal property of cooperative farms. In fact, this law declared that land belonged to those who cultivated it. The proportion of this common cooperative property established in 1967 constantly increased up until the changes in 1989.[36]

The act also declared that the cooperative had the right to distribute plots for individual use for free of charge either as household plots or as a form of in-kind salary. It maximized the size of household (arable) land to 5755 m², and the size of land as in-kind salary to 2877 m² — the same as the size of household wineyard or orchard. Household plots applied to members, while land as in-kind salary applied originally to employees of cooperatives, but later its applicability was extended to other categories, as well. This small plot was legally called personal property, which meant that the term private property was excluded even from legal formulations.[37]

According to the spirit of these acts, household plots played a considerable role in agricultural production as well as boosting individual income. During the 1970s and 1980s the income of cooperatives was derived from three equal sources: household production, sideline branches and common cultivation of plants and animal husbandry. Sideline branches could partly correct the mishaps of shortages in the economy and the absence of rural artisan workshops nationalised after 1945. 60% of all Hungarian households and 80% of all village households participated in household production. There were 1.7 million individually producing households in 1971 in Hungary. During this period, the majority of individual producers were not only cooperative members, but industrial workers of peasant origin. Whereas these individual producers produced mostly for self consumption during the 1960s; in the 1970s and 1980s they started to produce for the market, as well. Selling occurred mostly within the frames of cooperatives. Extra income earned in this way was invested into consumption: chiefly in construction works and car purchases.[38]

In general rural society was less interested in the ownership of land, but rather in the profit rate of work in this period.

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[36] *Ibidem.*

[37] *Ibidem.*

[38] *Ibidem*, pp. 137–147.

DECOLLECTIVISATION

Basically, two factors determined the process of Hungarian decollectivisation subsequent to the fall of communism. On the one hand, following the era of collectivisation a model of socialist large scale production had been established, which appeared successful for many (political parties and the public alike) who, therefore, envisaged its preservation. On the other hand, only 40% of land possessed by cooperatives remained registered to the original owners; the other 60% had already become the common property of cooperative farms. This common cooperative property was formed by the land of peasants abandoning the collective farms.

The re-privatisation of landed property was regulated in compensation laws passed between 1992 and 1994. During the process of decollectivisation three groups could obtain property in legal terms.[39]

The first group consisted of those one-time property owners who had brought land into the collective farms or their heirs who remained within the cooperatives working there in 1992 or retired members. They formed the group of proportional property owners. During the process of privatisation each of these proportional property owners obtained 1.5 hectares of land on average. Those who aspired to start individual production were charged by the costs of effectively distributing the land. The majority, however, sold their proportioned property cheap or leased it. This last case implied numerous small owners of one plot.

The second was the group of compensated owners, which consisted of those who lost their property during the 1950s and those former owners who formally joined the cooperatives in the period of full collectivisation, but subsequently left, and therefore, according to the 1967 acts lost their property rights. It was typical of the Hungarian land privatisation that those concerned did not receive their original property, but compensation vouchers in proportion to their previous land instead, while the act did not declare the maximum size of reclaimable land. Compensation, however, was regressive: it was based on the value of the lost land in golden crowns[40] (pre-1918 currency used to set the property value of land independent of market processes). One golden crown, in turn, was set at 1,000 forints. The ratio of regression is shown in Table 3.

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[39] *Ibidem*, pp. 182–209.

[40] The golden crown unit derives from an 1875 act and is used up to now to measure the profit ratio of arable lands. Nowadays, one hectare of arable land in Hungary is worth 19 golden crowns.

Table 3. The ration of compensation in case of actual land purchase.

Compensation value (thousand HUF)	Proportion of justified compensation (%)	Upper limit of compensation vouchers (thousand HUF)
- 100	100	100
101 - 300	80	260
301 - 500	50	310
501 - 1000	10	360

Source: based on Act No. 25/1991[41]

There was no compensation above the value of HUF 1,000,000. However, if a compensated person took the obligation of pursuing agricultural production as an individual entrepreneur, no regression was involved up to 1,000,000 HUF. In this case, compensation vouchers were completed by so-called compensation tokens up to HUF 1,000,000. This last one was applicable only for land purchase. The limit of compensation tokens together with compensation vouchers was set as of HUF 1,000,000.[42] There was no automatic acquisition of compensation plots: these were subjected to auction. The average ratio of land size per one compensated owner was 3.7 hectare. These plots were either leased or were the basis of new individual farms. Compensation vouchers were frequently sold out even before auction. Their market value was typically the 80% of the nominal price. Buyers were in many cases urban dwellers who purchased compensation land for purposes of investment rather than cultivation.

The third group consisted of so called persons of 20–30 golden crowns. This category applied to persons who were cooperative farm members or employees in 1992, but possessed no compensated or proportional compensated land property. Therefore, homogenously in the entire country all cooperative farm members were entitled to land worth of up to 30, while employees up to 20 golden crowns. 20 golden crowns was the value of land received by employees of former state farms. The majority of those obtaining property in this way either sold or leased their plots. In

[41] Act No. 25/1991 on regulating property relationships in order to partly compensate citizens unjustly damaged in property by the state, Magyar Közlöny 77 (07.11.1992).

[42] Compensation vouchers were issued also for those politically persecuted or whose houses or factories were nationalized during communism. The last category received a portion of the value of their previous houses or factories in compensation vouchers. These vouchers were not limited to the purchasing land only, but were available for buying flats or former state property to be privatized.

Hungary, approximately 1.5 million persons achieved proportional compensation; half a million people were compensated for their loss in property, and the same number received 20–30 golden crowns plots.

CONCLUSIONS

In Soviet-type regimes, the destruction of privately owned agricultural farms occurred due to state intervention and terror, since they desired obstruction to the program of accelerated industrialization and the new mechanism of power. Collectivisation became a staggering, collective event of social history that transformed former traditional structures. The state party appropriated the means of production; however, it was unable to control the labour processes due to the already "irresponsible" mentality of peasants who had earlier lost their ownership attitudes. Household production which was accepted by decision makers, being aware of its significance, partly counterbalanced these negative effects. The process of collectivisation was initiated by contemporary party and state policy makers; the practice of execution, however, resulted in independent dynamics and numerous self-sustaining procedures. These laid the grounds for the subsequent Hungarian model of socialist agriculture, which replaced the insistence on land with that on money. Decollectivisation occurred in a similar atmosphere. Those compensated persons who obtained actual landed property were unable or unwilling to work in agriculture since they were uncertain of their skills or the profitability of production in the conditions of the new market economy.

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