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SOCIALIST AGRICULTURAL POLICY: ORIGINS AND IMPLEMENTATIONS

From a review by Dr Damijan Guštin

The collection Socialist Agricultural Policy: Origins and Implementations focuses on the similarities, differences, continuities, and discontinuities of agricultural policies in European socialist countries after World War II. Drawing on an in-depth discussion of the ideological essence, development, and implementation of agrarian policy in the Soviet Union, the publication uses case studies from selected state socialist countries to demonstrate that, despite the original model being the same, socialist agricultural policy differed substantially in its implementation from country to country. The publication makes a significant scientific contribution to our understanding of how agrarian policy was formed and implemented in state socialist countries. It will be a valuable resource for historians, sociologists, and researchers specialising in agrarian economics and political regimes.

Front cover:
Fruit-growing and agricultural peasant working cooperative in Osojnik near Ptuj, conversation of tractor drivers, 1949.
Photo: Jože Mally, courtesy of: Museum of Contemporary History of Slovenia.

SOCIALIST AGRICULTURAL POLICY: ORIGINS AND IMPLEMENTATIONS

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Preface

In the fall of 2023, the Conference on Rural History in Cluj provided the setting for a panel discussion on the modalities of cooperativism as both a concept and a practice in socialist Eastern Europe after the Second World War. This discussion inevitably led to an examination of agricultural policy under socialism, given that the cooperative idea served as a key instrument for communist authorities in transforming the agricultural sector and imposing strict restrictions on private agriculture.

The inherent time constraints of panel discussions left many issues unresolved and arguments insufficiently substantiated. Recognizing this, and with the impressions from the conference still fresh, we decided to embark on a book project. We aimed to offer the authors ample space to support their conference theses with thorough literature and archival research. The book's structure mirrors the panel's organization at the Cluj conference, dividing the content into four chapters, each addressing significant phenomena and dilemmas of agricultural policy in socialist states. These chapters highlight the variations among individual countries, despite their adoption of the Soviet model. We delve into the origins of the Soviet model and its dissemination to other socialist nations, particularly Hungary, Czechoslovakia, Romania, and Yugoslavia, using Slovenia as a case study.

In the first chapter, Stephan Merl explores the conception and implementation of Soviet agricultural policy under the Stalin regime. He argues that Stalin lacked a consistent collectivization strategy from the outset. Initially, he favored a »modernization« approach, advocating for large-scale collective farms based on mechanized agriculture. However, the prioritization of forced industrialization led him to extract capital from the agricultural sector. In 1929, he mandated complete collectivization to subjugate peasants and secure this capital. After facing resistance, Stalin modified his policy in 1930, allowing collective farm members

to retain private plots and a few animals. Following the devastating famine of 1932/1933, Stalin introduced the »*kolkhoz* system,« a compromise that enabled state control over *kolkhoz* production while offering peasants a semblance of survival through in-kind advances at threshing and the use of family labor on private plots. For Stalin, collectivization became an end in itself, with mechanization serving primarily as a tool for state control rather than agricultural modernization, which would have required state investment.

In his second contribution, Stephan Merl examines the transfer and outcomes of the Soviet model in other European socialist countries. Despite its poor economic results, Soviet collectivization was presented as a successful model for financing industrialization. The need to stabilize collective farms became urgent after Stalin's death. Initial attempts to revise collectivization in countries like Hungary, East Germany, and Czechoslovakia were hindered by Khrushchev's insistence on completing collectivization rather than stabilizing existing farms. His eventual removal paved the way for modernizing agriculture by integrating agricultural production with industry. In this endeavor, and in improving the living standards of collective farm members, the Soviet Union lagged behind most Eastern European countries after 1955.

The second chapter, »Divergence,« comprises two contributions focusing on the Hungarian and Czechoslovakian experiences. Zsuzsanna Varga analyzes the long-term shifts in Hungarian agricultural policy and its deviations from the Soviet model. She identifies three distinct collectivization campaigns in Hungary: 1949–1953, 1955–1956, and 1959–1961. Her analysis centers not on the state-peasantry conflict, but on the evolution of the collective farm model in Hungary relative to the Stalinist blueprint. The initial two attempts to rapidly impose the Soviet agricultural system triggered severe production and supply crises, contributing to the 1956 revolution. In its aftermath, the Kádár regime sought to bolster its fragile political legitimacy by promising improved living standards. The food supply became a strategic priority, prompting the government to enact agricultural policy reforms – a move unprecedented in the Eastern Bloc. During and after the final collectivization phase, the agricultural lobby successfully transformed grassroots initiatives concerning work organization, wages, and household management into policies that gradually diverged from the Soviet model. This resulted in the legalization of previously banned or tolerated local initiatives through the 1967 law. The divergence from the *kolkhoz* model took the form of a »collective puzzle,« shaped by pressure from *kolkhoz* members and the mediating role of the agricultural lobby. This divergence facilitated the adoption of Western knowledge and technology, leading to the development of a hybrid Hungarian agricultural model in the 1970s.

In their article, Eduard Kubů and Jan Slavíček examine the post-forced-collectivization period in Czechoslovakia, highlighting the continuity of the authorities' agricultural objectives despite evolving tactics. The regime adopted a more sophisticated approach, employing subtle forms of coercion. From the late 1950s to the late 1980s, the Communist Party's rural policy remained consistent, characterized by increased investment, financial incentives for the cooperative sector (e.g., higher purchase prices), the expansion of cooperative activities beyond agriculture (auxiliary production), workforce skill development, and increased mechanization and chemicalization. Consequently, the rural population's standard of living rose, approaching urban levels in the 1960s and surpassing them by the mid-1970s, a trend that persisted until the regime's collapse. This led to increased construction in rural areas, both public (stores, cultural centers) and private. Rural social stability became a cornerstone of the regime. Notably, agriculture, and specifically agricultural cooperatives, received marginal attention in all four systemic economic reform attempts (1958–1960, 1967–1968, 1978–1980, and post-1988). While the regime failed to address agricultural issues significantly in the first reform, the stability and perceived success of agricultural cooperatives in fulfilling their objectives rendered major reforms unnecessary in subsequent attempts.

The third chapter, titled »Resistance and Dysfunctions,« presents two distinct case studies. Lev Centrih examines the unraveling of collectivization in Slovenia in 1952. He provides a micro-study of this process, using the Ig region near Ljubljana as an example. Despite the establishment of five cooperatives in the war-ravaged area by 1952, all were dissolved by 1953. Centrih argues that while collectivization aimed to consolidate peasant households, it faced significant resistance. Peasants often joined cooperatives primarily to avoid taxes and procurement quotas. The failure was further exacerbated by local officials, partisan veterans, and Party members who frequently prioritized personal interests over policy implementation. This local-level analysis reveals that the failure of collectivization stemmed not only from the divergence between Party goals and peasant expectations but also from internal Party conflicts, particularly among partisan veterans.

While Centrih's contribution highlights the dilemma faced by local party cadres, torn between personal interests and official pressure, Márton László illuminates the active resistance of the rural population to forced collectivization. He provides a detailed analysis of the 1949–1950 collectivization process in the Háromszék administrative district of Transylvania, and the subsequent resistance movements in the summer and autumn of 1950. The organization of *kolkhoz*es

began in 1949, with the first *kolkhoz* inaugurated on August 14. Under pressure to meet targets, mass organization commenced on June 12, 1950, employing coercive tactics, including occasional violence. By July and August, 21 *kolkhoz*es were established, encompassing 2,950 members and significant land holdings. However, tensions escalated, leading to resistance movements from July 24 to late September 1950. Security forces quelled these movements in a coordinated operation across 12 villages on the night of September 22–23, 1950. Peasants labeled as *kulaks* were held responsible for the unrest and, along with their families, were deported to remote regions. Clashes between security forces and locals defending the villagers resulted in casualties, including four locals being fatally shot.

The final chapter explores the introduction of cooperative ownership in Hungary and the role of reformed cooperatives in Slovenia's agricultural advancement during the late socialist period. Dániel Luka analyzes the legislative process from the 1950s to the 1967 Land Act (Law No. 4), which enabled cooperatives to acquire land ownership. Through an examination of primary sources, he elucidates the motivations behind the development, delays, and implementation of this legislation. This legislative »development« was part of a wider cooperative legislation that linked land issues with economic reforms. The regime had to reconcile ideological constraints with political and economic necessities to address the »land question«. The new legislation favored cooperatives and gradually eroded private land ownership, establishing a new form of communal land ownership rather than nationalizing land.

Marta Rendla examines the transformation of agricultural policy in the early 1970s, with a focus on the development of the private agricultural sector and the reform of socialist agricultural cooperatives. She also discusses the revitalization and modernization of the Agricultural Promotion Service, a key factor in agricultural production growth. By the end of the socialist era, Slovenia approached its ambitious food self-sufficiency targets, achieving 85% to 88% self-sufficiency. In 1990, domestic agriculture met approximately 82% of Slovenia's food needs. However, self-sufficiency was uneven, with shortfalls in grains, oils, and sugar, and surpluses in milk, beef, and poultry. Compared to Austria, Slovenia's wheat and maize yields were significantly lower, and milk production per cow lagged behind the European average, despite improvements after 1975. Consequently, the profitability of Slovenian agriculture in 1988 was only about 60% of the national average, and agricultural price ratios were less favorable than the European average.

These chapters highlight the similarities, differences, continuities, and discontinuities within the assumed Soviet agricultural model. They underscore

that agricultural modernization was a shared objective across Eastern European countries and the Soviet Union. Although the political goals were aligned, the paths to modernization varied within the socialist bloc.

Dr Žarko Lazarević

Motifs from the Savinja Valley, Slovenia, 1957.

Photo: Miloš Švabić, courtesy of: Museum of Contemporary History of Slovenia.

ORIGINS AND IMPLEMENTATIONS

Stephan Merl

Soviet Collectivization under Stalin, 1925 to 1953

INTRODUCTION

In order to work on collectivization and the construction of socialist agriculture, it is necessary to consider the entire period, and to distinguish the following phases with basically different political approaches: 1/ collectivization under the lead of Stalin based on class war and the subjugation of the peasantry to enforce a capital transfer from agriculture to industry; 2/ collectivization under Khrushchev sticking on finishing collectivization as a target on its own, although this policy had been basically put in question: in 1953 in the Soviet Union and in 1957 in the GDR and in Hungary; 3/ the efforts to stabilize the economically still weak collective farms in the 1960s after finishing collectivization and replacing Khrushchev; 4/ the final turn to modernize agriculture by concepts of industrialized agriculture, expecting economies of scale in agriculture; and 5/ the failure of these concepts, leading into a cost trap enforcing the rehabilitation of small-scale private agriculture in the 1980s.

Upon re-examining the most recent publications on collectivization in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union, I was shocked to realize the deficiencies. The contributions on collectivization in Eastern Europe often lacked information on what actually happened in the Soviet Union, relying on outdated literature

or Stalin's interpretation. Collectivization in Eastern Europe is frequently presented as a continuous process starting in 1948/49 and ending at the turn of the 1960s, ignoring the significant policy ruptures after Stalin's death. Soviet collectivization literature fails to consider other policies. I realized that comparing collectivization and socialist agricultural policy in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe[1] allows new insights into the Soviet case as well. In Eastern Europe, individual small-scale peasants coped for over a decade with compulsory deliveries and provided capital for industrialization. This disproves Stalin's affirmation that small-scale peasant farming was not even able to reproduce itself. It suggests that enforced industrialization would have worked in the Soviet Union as well, based on small-scale peasant farming, as Chayanov had suggested in the 1920s.[2] This article will have a closer look at collectivization in the Soviet Union under Stalin and combine this with some methodological reflections on the approach and central terms. The contribution touches two central questions for the assessment of socialist agricultural policy: first, whether enforced collectivization was necessary or harmful for industrialization, and second, whether Stalin's collectivization at all was directed towards the modernization of the agrarian sector. Special attention will be given to the decisive turning points of the agricultural policy.

STALIN'S COLLECTIVIZATION: A STEP TO AGRICULTURAL MODERNIZATION OR JUST A TARGET ON ITS OWN, TO SUBJUGATE THE PEASANTS AND TO BLACKMAIL CAPITAL FOR INDUSTRIALIZATION?

Under Stalin, the goal of collectivization drifted away from being a means to modernize agriculture within a socialist framework, as Lenin had seen it. It was reduced to subjugate the peasants to blackmail capital for industrialization, and became just an undertaking of social engineering to change the rural society in the desired direction.[3] Paying special attention to the economic aspects, I will show that Stalin's collectivization was harmful to the goal of modernizing agriculture and to the Soviet Union's economic development.

In the anthology on Collectivization in Eastern Europe, edited by Constantin Irodachi and Arnd Bauerkämper, Lynne Viola contributed the chapter on the Soviet Union.[4] She provides, however, no accurate description of Stalin's

1 The term Eastern Europe in this article is used for the Eastern and Central European countries (including the GDR) under communist rule.
2 Chayanov, Pis'mo. Merl, Was Chayanov's concept.
3 Bauerkämper and Irodachi, The Collectivization, 6.
4 Viola, Collectivization.

collectivization policy with all its errors and corrections, necessary for a fruitful comparison. Instead, she feasted on lofty statements and remote theoretical categorizations. Thus, she refers to James Scott's »high modernism« and Zygmunt Bauman's »gardening state«.[5] This sounds academic but lacks any practical usefulness for the comparison. She claims that collectivization primarily aimed to change the nature of the peasants (whatever this means) and did not follow economic purposes, blaming Moshe Lewin's emphasis on »taking grain« as too narrow. She speaks of a »colony« status of the countryside assuring and rationalizing its plunder[6]: »Collectivization was nothing if not a massive exercise in social engineering aimed at developing, overnight, a new society and economic policy. Undesirable elements – the "weeds", to use the Bauman metaphor – were mercilessly removed. An attempt to create a "new man" – the *kolkhoznik* – followed, through education, new labor patterns, and military indoctrination.«[7] Working on the topic for more than 50 years, I never found a hint that Stalin assessed the members of a collective farm as »new« men. He trusted them no more than any other peasant. Viola's focus on »resistance« is also of little help in understanding Stalin's exploitation of the peasants. Instead of speaking of »resistance«, we should not ignore that the members of collective farms under Stalin had to fight for their naked survival. Instead of checking such assessments critically, Viola presents the secret police reports on »heavy resistance of the *kulaks*« and »sabotage by the peasants« as if they tell the truth.[8] Some of her statements are misleading. Thus, she claims that collectivization was an »integral component of Stalin's First Five-Year-Plan«,[9] but even the final version of the plan in May 1929 did not see collectivization as a precondition for industrialization, suggesting starting it only in 1933, when the Soviet industry would be able to produce tractors domestically.[10]

Recent research on Soviet collectivization often ignores our current knowledge of Stalin's actions and interventions, more concretely, how strongly Stalin shaped Soviet collectivization, and his interpretations are presented as if they were correct.[11] I will give detailed information on Stalin's interference by looking at the ruptures of his collectivization policy between 1924 and 1953. He has

5 Ibidem, 63.

6 Ibid., 50, 54, 68.

7 Ibid., 64. Collectivization had been inspired by – »rational planning«, aiming to – »human betterment« (Zygmunt Bauman).

8 Viola, Collectivization, 55–56. She states that the destruction of traditional elites, in the parlance of the time the »liquidation of the kulak as a class«, was »a composite – and indeed requisite – measure« (55).

9 Viola, Collectivization, 49.

10 *Pyatiletnii plan*, 338. Merl, Handlungsspielräume, 184–211. The final plan suggested 13% collectivization for 1933. Viktor P. Danilov correctly argued that this plan from May 1929 presented the alternative: a quick industrialization without forced collectivization – Kollektivizatsiya.

11 Cf., for example, most recently, Kondrashin, *Rossiiskaya derevnya*.

changed his approach several times radically. Underestimating Stalin's role and his continuous interventions in collectivization leads to misinterpretations. We are today better able to understand what was behind Stalin's actions. Especially, Robert (Bob) W. Davies contributed to this by accurately describing how Stalin acted in the economic policy based on the archive material.[12] Davies demonstrates that Stalin reacted differently to the poor harvest of 1936 than he did in 1932/33, although in this year the grain shortage was even more severe.[13] He is able to hint at Stalin's motives and reflections. We learn about Stalin's way of decision making (cautious or pressing ahead), and about his understanding of the situations. Whenever his dictatorial rule was put in question, Stalin reacted very sensibly and effectively.[14]

Sometimes Stalin's acting suggested that he had doubts and was not sure what to do. As he normally pushed things ahead with exercising extreme pressure on the officials to over-fulfill the set targets, it is important to pay attention to situations in which he acted differently: sometimes he interrupted campaigns or suddenly acted with more caution and even set moderate goals. This happened, for example, in March 1930 with collectivization, in 1931 in reaction to the crisis of industrialization, in late 1932 during the famine, and with the end of the »Great Terror« in 1938[15]. In these cases, Stalin set temporary more moderate goals, as, for example, for the Second Five-Year-Plan, or even sought a compromise, as in the end of 1932, with the members of the collective farms in response to the famine. When the danger was overcome, Stalin often returned to accelerate the tempo and newly exerted extreme pressure on the officials.

My approach is primarily interested in the economic aspects of collectivization and »socialist agriculture« and the goal of agricultural modernization. Lenin expected that small-scale peasants would voluntarily join collective farms out of fear of economic ruin, as Marxist theory suggested. In his view, providing tractors (mechanical traction power) would directly convince the peasants. For Lenin, the modernization aspect stood in the center, not exploiting the peasants for financing industrialization as under Stalin. Interestingly, Lenin paid no special attention to the strong rural underemployment.

12 Especially the final four volumes of his industrialization series, written based on access to the archive material, provide important insights in Stalin's acting: Davies, *The industrialisation of Soviet Russia 4;* Davies and Wheatcroft, *The Industrialisation of Soviet Russia 5*; Davies, *The Industrialisation of Soviet Russia 6*; Davies, Harrison, Khlevnyuk, and Wheatcroft, *The Industrialisation of Soviet Russia 7*.

13 Davies, *The Industrialisation of Soviet Russia 6*.

14 Merl, Trägt Baberowskis Gewaltansatz.

15 Ibid. Stalin blamed Ezhov for the Great Terror and ordered his execution, even though we now know from the archives that Stalin gave each order himself.

My contribution draws on the collectivization experience in Eastern Europe to gain a better understanding of alternative solutions in the Soviet case. The standard approach goes in the opposite direction, comparing collectivization in Eastern Europe with the »Soviet model«, not understanding that such a model did not exist. Until now, very few studies have looked in detail at the whole experience of Socialist agricultural policy (collectivization and constructing socialist agriculture) between 1924 and 1992. Only such a comprehensive perspective allows a profound reassessment.[16] I will begin with some methodological remarks on the use of the sources and then examine the myths surrounding the achievements of collectivization, which are still prevalent in present-day literature.

METHODOLOGICAL REMARKS ON THE USE OF SOURCES

Archival material and other sources from the time under Stalin present the »official« interpretation, following Stalin's view, and not the »truth«. As Merle Fainsod demonstrated in his study on Smolensk, there is no discernible difference between the published and archival materials.[17] Every »fact« or interpretation, therefore, needs critical checking. In recent publications, however, not only do young and inexperienced historians use the archive material uncritically and present what they find there as the »truth«.[18] What the secret policy reports present as sabotage, terror acts, and resistance in reality often were only reactions to attacks by the regime and not independent acts against the regime.[19] Thus, most horses and cows perished inside the collective farms due to the lack of fodder or epidemics, and not due to »peasant resistance«. [20] In any case, it is necessary to verify whether the other reasons provided are possible and plausible. Fighting desperately for survival should not be classified as resistance.

The officials manipulated their reports in reaction to the pressure put on them first by Stalin and then by Khrushchev. For fear of their job, they reported what they expected Stalin or Khrushchev wanted to hear. They presented alleged culprits who could be held responsible in public for mistakes and errors. By exerting such pressure on the officials, Stalin and then Khrushchev lost the opportunity to receive honest reports, which would have described the situation as drastic and

16 For contributions, having the whole relevant period in Russia and the Soviet Union in view, see: Merl, Reassessment; Merl, Why the Soviet Union, Vol. 5.

17 Fainsod, *Smolensk*.

18 Cf. Kondrashin, *Rossiiskaya derevnya*; Viola, Collectivization.

19 During my research in the mid–1970s, I checked the information on what the archival material classifies as »terror acts« by *kulaks*. Most were merely acts of revenge against previous acts of state terror perpetrated against the actors.

20 On the perishing of cattle, see below.

miserable as it was. Many recent contributions overlook the extensive research on Soviet collectivization conducted in the 1970s and 1980s.[21]

Stalin never confessed his own mistakes (or miscalculations), not even to his closest companions. Blaming others opened him the opportunity to change his policy, while he publicly denied the policy change. This was his strategy to construct the myth of his infallibility already at the beginning of the 1930s.[22] To keep dictatorial rule, Stalin's actions had to be unpredictable or uncalculable to others.[23] He consistently presented others as scapegoats in public. He often ordered the killing or execution of those who had warned him, as happened in 1932 with Mikhail Volf, the vice minister of state farms, who had explained in mid-1928 why collectivization could cause a famine.[24]

Khrushchev's approach was somewhat different. Stalin maintained the myth of his infallibility by being as cautious as possible with his public statements. This allowed him to adjust his policy in the event of failure or danger, thereby avoiding being held responsible for mistakes. Khrushchev, on the contrary, often made foolish promises in public. As he connected his person with these promises, he was seen as the responsible person in the case of failure, as with his promise to surpass the US in the per capita consumption of milk and meat by 1961. He, therefore, could not blame others for being responsible.[25]

WHAT MYTHS EXIST ON THE ACHIEVEMENTS OF COLLECTIVIZATION?

The »class differentiation« of the Russian peasantry

The »class differentiation« of the Russian peasantry was a myth, although there was social differentiation.[26] In none of the East European countries had a capitalist »class differentiation« developed, in some countries, however, a class differentiation between noble estate owners and land workers existed. Convincing criteria to determine who was an »exploiting« farmer did not exist.[27] The seasonal

21 I would like to mention especially: Danilov, *Sozdanie*; Danilov, *Sovetskaya dokolkhoznaya derevnya: naselenie;* Danilov, *Sovetskaya dokolkhoznaya derevnya: sotsialnaya struktura;* Jasny, *Socialized Agriculture*; Lewin, *Russian Peasants*; Karcz, Agriculture; Millar, Mass Collectivization; Millar and Nove, A Debate; Hunter, Soviet Agriculture; Kollektivizatsiya; *Tragediya*. Cf. Also Fitzpatrick, *Stalin's Peasants*; Viola, *The Best Sons*; Viola, *The Unknown Gulag*. On the discussion about collectivization under Perestroika, see: Merl, Kollektivierung.

22 Cf. my comment on Stalin's »dizziness of success« in Merl, Stalin.

23 Gregory, *The Political Economy.* Merl, Sovetskaya ekonomika. Merl, Trägt Baberowskis Gewaltansatz.

24 Merl, Der Holodomor. On Volf, see also below, notes 45 and 74.

25 Merl, Entstalinisierung.

26 Merl, *Der Agrarmarkt*. Chayanov, Pis'mo. Shanin, *The Awkward Class*.

27 Merl, *Der Agrarmarkt*. Swain, Eastern European Collectivization.

hiring of laborers during the peak harvest season was a widespread practice. Only in some countries with a developed peasantry, such as Germany, did farmers use hired laborers permanently, typically one farmhand and one maid.

Two other forms of »exploitation«, however, played a role everywhere during collectivization: The exploitation of the peasants by the state, and the »self-exploitation« of small-scale peasants. Exploitation by the state was the key feature of collectivization under Stalin. Dictating the producer prices, the state controlled the income of the collective farms and disposed of their products without considering reproduction. »Self-exploitation« was a widespread practice of small-scale peasant agriculture. The peasants used »family labor« in their production, having no fixed value as work against wages in the socialist industry. Family labor was provided without calculating the average salary or the time worked.[28]

»Modernization by mechanization« under Stalin?

Modernization would have required more than just providing tractors, and since the mid-1930s, combine harvesters. The crucial questions are, first, whether traction power during the 1930s at all surpassed or restored the level reached in 1929, that means, whether mechanical traction power did more than partly substitute the animal traction power, destroyed by »taking grain«, and second: whether use was made of the available agricultural knowledge and technology (as crop rotation), to rise plant yields and animal performance substantially. For collectivization under Stalin, the answer to both questions is no. Mechanical traction power during the 1930s did not fully replace the animal traction power of 1929. Mechanization pursued the goal of controlling agricultural production and even sabotaged the introduction of improved crop rotations.[29] The import of tractors and heavy agricultural machinery was halted in 1932, marking the commencement of domestic production at the Stalingrad Tractor Factory. But tractors under Stalin could be used only for a limited number of field work as there was a very short supply of trailed implements. Already in 1937, due to Stalin's shift in focus to military defense, further supplies of tractors and fuel were reduced. A significant portion of the Machine-tractor stations' (MTS) tractors were out of order due to a lack of spare parts and poor repair. All attempts in the 1930s to increase agricultural production by seed rotation and elementary measures (agro-minimum) were blocked by Stalin's insistence on a large sown area under grain.[30]

28 Swain, *Collective Farms*.

29 Merl, Kak udalos' Stalinu. Merl, Why did the Attempt. On the mechanization during the 1930s, cf. below.

30 Merl, Kak udalos' Stalinu. Merl, Why did the Attempt.

COLLECTIVIZATION UNDER STALIN: THE DECISIVE TURNING POINTS OF HIS POLICY TOWARDS COLLECTIVIZATION, 1925 TO 1953

Stalin's interest in collectivization started with his decision to enforce industrialization in 1926.

In the following, I will describe in detail how and why Stalin's concept of collectivization was formed, paying special attention to the many ruptures of his approach, which started from »taking grain« and led to the subjugation of the former peasants as forced laborers without payment to provide capital for industrialization.

Policy before the start of wholesale collectivization at the end of 1929

Unlike Stalin's dogmatic version, the land reform in 1917 was not ordered from above. The peasants started to occupy estate land already under the Provisional Government. They ran this »revolution« against the land-owning nobles on their own. While the Bolsheviks initially intended to transform the estates directly into large-scale state farms, Lenin decided to win the peasants' support for the revolution by taking over a law project, developed based on peasant electoral mandates by the left wing of the Social Revolutionaries, tolerating the independent acting of the peasants with seizing the landowners' land.[31]

Reacting to the harvest failure in 1924 and the bad mood of the rural population toward the new regime, the Bolsheviks developed their own agricultural program. The policy of turning one's face to the countryside (*Litsom k derevne*) aimed to overcome the fundamental problem of underemployment in the rural workforce. It proposed to provide incentives to the farmers to create new jobs in the countryside, to improve agricultural techniques to raise yields and animal productivity and focused on organizing the peasant farms – as after 1904 – in cooperatives. Developing agriculture should raise the means for capital transfer to industrialize the country. The state should support cooperatives in providing credits, inputs, processing, and marketing to farmers.[32]

All the proposed measures were well-founded. However, the intention to start with accumulating capital in agriculture to then finance industrialization would not have allowed for quick industrialization. *Litsom k derevne* was not a program of industrialization, but a feasible program to develop peasant agriculture.

31 Merl, Traditionalistische Widersetzlichkeit. Merl, Dekret.
32 Merl, Was Chayanov's concept. Wehner, *Bauernpolitik.*

In this regard, it had no alternative. The speed of agricultural development would depend on the state's willingness to provide finances and accept social differentiation in the countryside. As long as the peasant farms were not hindered by their capability to produce, they would more or less quickly increase production and improve farming. Even under unfavorable market conditions, they would not have an alternative to take the burden and provide capital for industrialization. This is evident from the collectivization experience in the Eastern European countries between 1948 and 1962 (see my second article). The capital transfer could be managed by the price policy in connection with compulsory deliveries. As long as the state did not exercise violence, the risk of destroying means of production was negligible, and the peasants would have had to go on with agricultural production, lacking other sources of income.[33]

In the mid-1920s, a plan for developing agriculture during the First Five-Year-Plan was formulated. The group around Chayanov (Nikolai Kondratiev, Nikolai Makarov, and Alexander Chelintsev) was involved and prepared projects for the industrialization of agriculture, starting with vertical cooperation. Collectivization should be placed on the agenda when domestic production of tractors can begin and a mechanized agricultural technique is provided from 1933 onward.[34]

Litsom k derevne was based on the revision of the concept of »class differentiation«. The *kulturniki* were categorized as part of the »working peasants«, as they would get rich not by exploiting others (like the pre-capitalist *kulaks*) but by their own work. Even if they employed a temporary land-worker in addition to their family labor, they were not seen as *kulaks*. Chayanov spoke of a new generation of peasants, who emerged during World War and the Civil War, standing loyal to Soviet power. *Litsom k derevne* intended to support these *kulturniki*, seen as peasants willing to improve their farming methods and utilize scientific knowledge, to increase and intensify production.[35]

When grain procurement at the beginning of the 1925/26 campaign went slower than expected, Stalin attacked the peasants and blamed them for »sabotaging« grain procurement and thus industrialization. He urged the Party to revive the concept of »class war« in the countryside. His accusation of the peasants was not justified; until the end of the procurement campaign in the spring of 1926, the expected amount of grain was collected. As the state had dictated lower

33 Merl, *Der Agrarmarkt*. Merl, Was Chayanov's concept.

34 Merl, Was Chayanov's concept.

35 Chayanov, Pis'mo. In his 1927 recommendations to Molotov, he stressed the basic points, neglected under Stalin: the need to provide state financial support for the start of agricultural modernization, the need to invest in agricultural research and in the qualification of the agricultural producers to improve farming, and autonomy for the peasants to decide on the best use of the human capital and the means of production by themselves.

grain prices, the capital transfer from agriculture to industry in 1926/27 was significant. The peasants had no alternative but to sell their grain to the state and thus had to accept low prices.[36]

Stalin's return to the concept of »class war« in 1926/27 was an attack against the *kulturniki* promoted by other members of the Party leadership. Disenfranchisement for the election to the soviets in 1927 was widened, and a special »individual taxation« was introduced for the wealthiest three percent of the peasants.[37] Although the available data show that »exploitation« of poor peasants by *kulaks* was hardly existent in the Soviet countryside, and that there was not yet a capitalist stratification, Stalin stuck to his attack against the well-to-do peasants. Other leading Party members tried to defend them, as the increase in agricultural production would significantly depend on their work; they ordered the exemption of *kulturniki* from individual taxation and the return of the right to vote for the local soviets to them.[38]

Although the decision to accelerate industrialization and not wait for accumulated capital in agriculture was unavoidable, a combination of forced industrialization and promoting peasant farms would have been feasible. Setting unfavorable producer prices for agricultural goods would have been possible, as long as no direct attack against the well-to-do peasants took place. They would have increased their production and improved their farming to reduce their burden. Stalin's attack on the well-to-do farmers also affected those rural households that lacked sufficient implements and animal traction power to cultivate their fields independently and relied on leasing means of production.[39] Frightened to be classified and expropriated as *kulaks* and »class enemies«, the well-to-do peasants and the *kulturniki* reacted to Stalin's attack by stopping what was classified as exploitation: lending out farm implements or horse traction power, widely practiced before in the grain-producing regions. Hiring labor, however, hardly existed: only 0.5% of the farms in the Soviet countryside hired labor.[40]

A feasible alternative to securing the state procurement of grain for export to obtain the currency to finance industrialization would also have been the return to a tax in kind, as introduced by Lenin in 1921. In the mid-1920s, however, nobody was thinking about this solution. The tax in kind had provided the state with the amount of grain over which the state wanted to dispose. But in 1924, it was substituted by a money tax, as the costs of procuring and storing the grain

36 Merl, *Der Agrarmark,* 123–40. Merl, Stalins Irrweg.
37 Merl, Was Chayanov's concept. Merl, Stalins Irrweg.
38 Merl, *Der Agrarmarkt*. Merl, Was Chayanov's concept.
39 Merl, Was Chayanov's concept.
40 Merl, *Der Agrarmarkt*, 424–37.

seemed too high.[41] It should take until the end of 1932 for Stalin to decide to return to such a tax in kind with the introduction of compulsory deliveries, but he denied that he copied Lenin.

At the July Plenum of the Central Committee in 1928, Stalin claimed that the peasants would have to render a tribute for industrialization, taking over Yevgeni Preobrazhensky's concept (after his exclusion from the Party) of »primary socialist accumulation«. In 1929, Stalin transferred this claim to collectivization, ordering the organization of collective farms based on the peasants' existing farm implements.[42]

In his approach to the peasants, Stalin did not know any other way than to exercise violence, although he never spoke out about it in public. He preferred to exercise pressure on his officials, leaving them no alternative but to use force against the peasants if they did not risk being repressed themselves.

At the beginning of 1928, Stalin intervened personally in the slow running of the grain procurement campaign. Just before, the Party had, for the 10th anniversary of the revolution in November 1917, given the poor peasants as an award the privilege to pay less taxes. This had reduced the pressure on them to market their grain and contributed to a decrease in state grain procurement. Traveling to the Urals and Siberia, Stalin put the local officials there under severe pressure. He reestablished the procurement dictatorship as it was practiced under War Communism. In January 1928, he ordered the exercise of force for grain procurement and to expropriate stored grain (even from millers). Local markets were closed. This had fatal consequences for the domestic grain supply. In the spring of 1928, it even became necessary to import grain.[43]

In his article »On the grain front«, Stalin claimed that grain marketing in comparison to the prewar level was cut by half. He blamed the small-scale peasant farms for not being able to provide enough market grain. His data, however, included only grain exports and grain consumption in urban areas. It ignored that the peasants living in the »grain consumption zone« in the central and northern part of the country also consumed marketed grain, often transported over hundreds of kilometers. Including their consumption, grain marketing was only 20% below the prewar level. This corresponded to the still lower gross grain harvest and the increase in the rural population.[44]

41 Merl, Beschluss.
42 Merl, Stalins Irrweg. Merl, Agricultural reforms.
43 Merl, Stalins Irrweg. Merl, Agricultural reforms. Merl, *Der Agrarmarkt.*
44 Merl, *Der Agrarmarkt*. Also cf. Merl, Stalins Irrweg, and Merl, Agricultural reforms.

The collectivization campaign of early 1928 and the subsequent decision against the voluntary establishment of dwarf collective farms

In early 1928, as the state exerted pressure on grain procurement, the first collectivization campaign began. The state promised peasants willing to organize a collective farm to provide a tractor for each new farm. This was attractive for rural households with land but without the necessary implements, especially after Stalin's return to class war had made it difficult to find a peasant willing to rent out implements and animal traction power. Although, in the spring of 1928, only about 1% of the peasants organized in collective farms, the state was unable to keep its promise; only one of hundreds of new collective farms received a tractor. The number of tractors was minimal, as nearly all had to be imported, and imports had been strongly reduced in 1926.

In a letter, published by the »Pravda« in June 1928, some peasants from Samara described how they could imagine the transfer to large-scale farming: they proposed »peasant-state farms« instead of collective farms. The state should take over command of production on these farms, but pay the members very modest monthly wages for their work. They touched the core of the problem with collectivization: how to allow the members to survive under conditions of strong rural underemployment. For the government, Mikhail Volf, busy with working out the Five-Year-Plan for agriculture, answered in the »Pravda« in July to the proposal of the peasants. He hinted at the problem that mechanization would further reduce the labor input needed in agricultural production, thereby exacerbating the issue of rural underemployment. He stated that it would be necessary to develop new, more labor-intensive production branches in agriculture to cope with the surplus of the workforce in the countryside, in order to avoid famine in the future.[45]

In the summer of 1928, the Party leadership evaluated the results of the collectivization campaign. They came to a clear conclusion: nobody needed such small collective farms with just a few members, holding no farm implements and managing widely split land allotments. The Party leaders decided that the scarce tractors should be provided only to collective farms with large land allotments. The organization of such large-scale farms should be done from above by organizations capable of running tractors and tractor columns.

From now on, collective farms with tractors were organized from above, and the principle of voluntary joining was increasingly manipulated and substituted

45 Der Bauernsowchos. In: Merl (ed.), *Sowjetmacht und Bauern*, 487–94. Volf later became the vice Minister of state farms.

by the exercise of pressure. To get the large fields necessary for using tractor columns, all or nearly all members of a village commune had to join. To put pressure on them, those refusing to join were offered fields at a great distance from the village. In response to the pressure exerted by Stalin from above, this decision led to the initiation of a bureaucratic competition among organizations capable of organizing agricultural production with tractors: Khlebotsentr[46], Kolkhoztsentr[47], and Traktortsentr[48]. They all wanted to get the scarce tractors, but only the projects promising the largest number of peasant farms and hectares to be included had a chance.

The competition to acquire tractors intensified when regional party organizations were required to develop their own five-year-plans in 1929. Under the general pressure from Stalin to overfulfill the plans set from above, all started extremely ambitious plans far from reality, and promised to end wholesale collectivization in an always shorter time to get all tractors (about two out of some thousand rayons had a chance to get tractors) and declared themselves to »rayons of wholesale collectivization.«[49]

The reasonable Party decision of the summer of 1928, coupled with the pressure from above, had crazy consequences. The lack of tractors alone pushed the promised rate of collectivization up. It was a competition between bureaucratic organizations. In trying to implement their plans, they consistently pressured the peasants more harshly. As the pressure increased and the farmers had to join against their will, it became a normal picture that after signing a contract, the males went off to find work in industry, as on their fields, now »steel horses« took over work.[50]

To halt this intense competition and to align the number of organized large-scale farms with the available tractors, intervention from above would have been necessary. However, Stalin continued to accelerate the pace of collectivization. Neither he nor Molotov was willing to stop this »revolutionary process«.[51]

46 All-Russian union of agricultural cooperatives for the production, processing and sale of grain and oil-seeds.

47 All-Union council of the collective farms.

48 All-Union council of the Machinery-Tractor-Stations.

49 Merl, *Die Anfänge*, 370–80. Kolkhoztsentr and some other organizations, however, suggested a higher speed than the Five-Year-Plan. They explained the need to establish large–scale collective farms to secure market grain for the state. They expected that the state would take over a significant share of costs. When the state reduced its share to 0.73 billion rubles, they simply increased the share to be provided by the peasants from the initially calculated 30% to 48%.

50 Some of the projects initially got big publicity, that of the Sevchenko state farm in Ukraine, for example, organizing the peasants with the help of tractor columns – Merl, *Die Anfänge*; Merl, Stalins Irrweg.

51 Merl, Handlungsspielräume. Merl, *Die Anfänge.*

Stalin's decision to start the process of mass collectivization based on peasant implements (1928/29)

Obviously, under the impression of reports suggesting little peasant resistance to collectivization, Stalin decided to initiate mass collectivization based on existing peasant implements. This required the middle peasants, holding farm implements, to join. Instead of receiving tractors from the state, the collective farms should now work based on the peasants' means of production. In other words, the middle peasants should be expropriated after joining the collective farms.[52]

In his speeches, Stalin now talked of a »drive« of the middle peasants to join collective farms. This put intense pressure on the officials: they had to provide what Stalin only claimed, to push the unwilling middle peasants into these farms. This increased their pressure and violence against the peasants even further. At the same time, the already small amount of money planned for investments into agriculture was further cut.[53] Although this meant that all state finances should be allocated to industrialization, state propaganda went on to present collectivization as the mechanization of agricultural production using tractors. At the same moment, the planning of agro-industrial complexes went on, and massive state farms were organized. Ultimately, none of these projects received the necessary state financing.[54]

To reserve all state finances for industrialization and to collectivize based on peasant implements was Stalin's personal decision. This suggests that »taking grain« for financing industrialization – different from what Viola claims[55] – was his main motive behind his decision to collectivize. He expected that »taking grain« from the collective farms would be easier than from a large number of individual peasants. Grain exports should provide the currency for financing industrialization.[56] And Stalin went on to stress that plans were not binding but had to be overfilled as much as possible.

Wholesale collectivization and the uprising of peasant women (1929–1930)

At the 1929 November Plenum, Stalin ordered the start of wholesale collectivization. The worker brigades, standing in the countryside to take the grain, should participate. And he sent 25,000 skilled industrial workers and Party

52 Merl, Stalins Irrweg.
53 Merl, Was Chayanov's concept. Wehner, *Bauernpolitik.*
54 Merl, Handlungsspielräume, 365–69.
55 Viola, Collectivization, 68. Lewin, »Taking Grain«.
56 Merl, *Die Anfänge,* 370–400. Kondrashin, *Rossiiskaya derevnya.*

members to the countryside. They should undergo a two-week schooling and then take over to run a collective farm.[57] Stalin was convinced that for running a large-scale agricultural farm, different from industry, special knowledge would not be necessary. He did not mention that private plots should be kept in the collective farms.

In this campaign, voluntariness no longer played a role. The Party now set on a seemingly democratic voting by communication among those present to construct liability. This technique had first been used in early 1928 to make the peasants vote for »self-taxation«, ordered by the state, within their village communes. All members of the village were required to attend the meeting, now convened and run by state officials (instead of the village elder). Outsiders, secret policemen, and members of worker brigades participated to intimidate those attending from openly expressing their opinions. To establish liability, every member of the village commune was required to be present during the voting process. In the meeting, the organization of a collective farm stood on the agenda. Initially, it was possible to hear different perspectives. But by the voting in the end, everybody had to agree, »convinced« by the arguments of the officials. Those present are aware that any dissenting vote would have consequences and would likely result in punishment, at the very least, including arrest. Sometimes, the chairman of the gathering cut things short and put directly to a vote, »Who is against Soviet power?« When nobody dared to say »I am«, he would summon, »The establishment of the collective farm is unanimously accepted.« Through this manipulation of the peasants' vote, even those opposed were included in a binding decision, as they were present during the ballot without openly protesting.[58]

The officials had no real chance to convince the peasants of the advantages of collective farming, as it was obvious to everybody that they did not exist. The peasants knew how miserable such farms were. If they failed to »convince« the peasants, Stalin blamed the officials for being unable to fulfill their job and replaced them. With this pressure, Stalin reached both: that the officials reported »successes« to him, and that they pushed collectivization ahead by always increasing pressure on the peasants, frightening them by making use of the existing enemy pictures of »sabotage«, declaring them to be counterrevolutionaries or to be *kulaks*.

With his speech in December 1929 to the Conference of Marxist Agricultural Scientists, Stalin made crucial decisions about the final nature of Soviet collective farms, even as the campaign of wholesale collectivization was already underway. He now changed the classification of the collective farms. Previously, he had

57 Merl, *Sozialer Aufstieg*, 73–90. Viola, *The Best Sons*.
58 Merl, *Politische Kommunikation*, 28–29, 64–72.

categorized them as a »transitional type«; now, he referred to them as a »socialist form of production«. This had a repressive meaning: as »socialist forms«, the collective farms lost the possibility to disagree with state orders. Not fulfilling state orders from now on meant that they were »pseudo-collective farms« and had to be liquidated, losing all their property.

At this conference, Stalin also made his final decision on the *kulaks*. They should not be admitted to collective farms. Previously, in the Soviet case, and subsequently in some Eastern European countries, several officials had proposed admitting *kulaks* under strict conditions. Some *kulaks* had already been admitted after giving all their property to these farms in the hope that this would open up a chance of survival for them. Now they were no longer allowed to enter. Stalin announced the »liquidation of the *kulaks* as a class«. The Central Committee decreed their liquidation on January 30, 1930.[59] Many of those peasants, whom the Party had praised before as *kulturniki*, shared the fate of the *kulaks*.

The order to arrest the *kulaks* and deport their families was the most effective measure to force the other peasants into the collective farms. Due to the vague criteria given, every peasant could be declared to be a *kulak* or a *podkulak*. The share of peasant farms registered as members of collective farms went up from 20% to 59% between January and March 10, 1930.

In his speech to the Marxist agricultural scientists, Stalin claimed that petty peasant farms were unable to secure even simple reproduction in agriculture. The extent to which Stalin lost ground in his attitude toward the petty peasants with this claim is evident from the subsequent collectivization experience in Eastern Europe. It convincingly proved that small-scale peasant farms could secure reproduction even under unfavorable conditions set by compulsory deliveries and attacks from above during the class war. In the Eastern European countries, most small-scale peasants resisted for over a decade under this extreme pressure. During this time, their economic results were even better than those of the collective farms around them, subsidized by the state (see my second article). This suggests that financing industrialization would have also worked in the Soviet Union based on small peasant farms, against Stalin's claim that large-scale enterprises, even if they work with peasant implements in the present »manufacturer period of the collective farms« would be superior.

On January 5, 1930, the Central Committee decreed that collectivization should be further accelerated and the deadlines shortened. It distinguished between three regions, newly showing to what extent collectivization headed to get grain for export: collectivization in the main grain producing regions should be finished first: in the Lower and the Middle Volga regions and the North Caucasus

59 Merl, *Bauern*, 61–103.

already in the fall of 1930 or in the spring of 1931, in all other grain producing regions between the fall of 1931 and the spring of 1932, and in all other regions until the end of the First Five-Year-Plan (in 1933).[60] This decree did not mention the delivery of tractors.

At the time Stalin ordered the start of wholesale collectivization at the November Plenum, no final statute existed. It was only in December 1929 that the Yakovlev Commission was established to draft the *Kolkhoz* statute. On the recommendation of this commission, the Central Committee, on January 5, 1930, spoke of the *artel*[61] as the normal statute, but still classified it as a »transitional form«. This suggested that only the commune would be the final form. Socialization should include everything that provides commodity production. Speaking of the *artel* as a transitional form in a time with extreme pressure on the officials to »overfill« every order, was understood to organize communes directly. Stalin personally contributed to this understanding when a preliminary version of the *artel* statute, published on February 6, 1930, and personally approved by him, no longer mentioned a private plot and a private cow.[62] It thus did not come as a surprise that several officials started to expropriate even small domestic animals and poultry. This suggests that Stalin did not expect serious resistance to the collectivization and was well aware of what acting on the »dizziness of success« meant.

January – February 1930: The peasant women's uprising (babi bunty)

With the collectivization campaign widespread, the private farms were fully liquidated, and the cows were expropriated. Uprisings of peasant women against the expropriation »of the cow« started and turned into a mass movement in February 1930. The females attacked the regional centers of state power with their traditional arms: sickles, pitchforks, and scythes. In some rural districts, the Soviet regime lost control.[63] The fact caused a strong reaction from the women, as the loss of the cow threatened the family's survival. Primarily, women led the resistance as they had less to fear. While men risked direct arrest or being shot on the spot, the regime did not dare to touch the women in this way, declaring the

60 Merl, *Die Anfänge*, 377.

61 A traditional Russian term used before for semiformal associations of peasants leaving their village for seasonal jobs as workers in the cities or as hunters, organizing themselves and living together at the place of work far from home.

62 Merl, *Die Anfänge*, 396–99.

63 Ibid., 148–53. The uprisings became more widespread in the fall of 1929 and turned into a mass movement at the beginning of 1930.

mothers of most Red Army soldiers to be counter-revolutionaries, saboteurs, or enemies of the people. In all cases, the male behind the uprising had to be found, who could be repressed as a *kulak* or »priest«. The Red Army could not be used to fight against the uprisings. Only the secret police could be used, but in a limited way.

Only now did Stalin realize that the campaign to accelerate collectivization by fully liquidating private farms had created a critical situation and endangered his rule. He was deeply concerned about the rapidly spreading uprisings of women peasants against the »collectivization of the cow«. The chaos caused threatened the start of the forthcoming spring sowing campaign. Stalin understood that he had to act immediately.

Although he himself was responsible for the actions of the officials, which led to the total liquidation of private farms, Stalin decided to blame them and calm the situation by emphasizing the voluntary nature of joining collective farms. Most importantly, he conceded to the peasant women by allowing them to keep a private cow and plot of land after joining the *artel*. To reach the peasant women directly, his article »Dizzy with Success« was published in »Pravda« of March 2, 1930, together with the revised and now final version of the *artel* statute, conceding a private plot, a cow, and some animals after joining.[64]

With Stalin's interventions, the Party and the state quickly regained control. As he fulfilled the main requests of the peasant women, the uprisings broke down within a few days. Formally, some officials were arrested and judged. However, the consequences for collectivization were severe: the registered rate of collectivization declined from 59% in early March to approximately 20% by June 1930. Several »collective farms« disappeared. Exiting the collective farms was still easy in March and April 1930 because, in most cases, the actual organization had not yet begun. The 1930 spring sowing, and accordingly the harvesting of these fields in the fall of 1930, was mostly done individually. Stalin's responsibility for the »abuses« was out of question. He had put the officials under pressure to speed up the complete collectivization. Acting on the »success« reports addressed to him, »Dizzy with Success« perfectly described what had pushed him ahead.

Blaming the officials of all abuses, Stalin acted differently from Lenin in 1921; to build up the myth of his infallibility, he did not confess any of his own errors or failures. His reaction in March 1930 set the precedent for how he would handle future crises and threats to his rule. He denied his own responsibility and even claimed that he had not changed his course at all. Also in March 1930, his intervention was combined with a temporary, rather tactical retreat, and a permanent

64 Merl, Stalins Irrweg. Merl, Stalin: Vor Erfolgen.

concession; his condemning of the hurt of »voluntary joining« was tactical. Already in the fall of 1930, he ordered the restart of collectivization and the liquidation of *kulak* farms, while tolerating the same violence against the peasants. Granting a private plot and a cow, however, became a permanent concession.

It would be wrong to see the private plots primarily as a concession; they became the precondition to stabilize the system of collective farms after the 1932/33 famine. Stalin kept this combination of small-scale and large-scale production until the end of his life. In 1933, he finally understood the importance of private plots: they gave members of collective farms an option to survive by producing some food independently, while the state could dispose of the collective farms' total production without paying for it. This was also the reason why Stalin insisted that private plots be made an obligatory part of the statutes of collective farms in Eastern Europe.

Stalin was traumatized by his failure to foresee the conflict with the peasant women over the cow. On April 3, 1930, in another article published in »Pravda«, Stalin blamed the Party for not giving enough attention to the work with the peasant women. Even at the first union congress of collective farm shock workers, on February 19, 1933, at the peak of the famine, he mentioned that some years before, there had been a »minor misunderstanding« between Soviet power and the peasant women »about the cow«. »Today we solved this problem«, he added, which was followed by applause.[65]

Finalization of the system of collective farms after the 1932/32 famine by a compromise with their members, allowing their survival

Stalin's intervention on March 2, 1930, did not alter his approach to collectivization: arbitrary grain procurement continued, similar to that during War Communism. Taking grain did not care about the collective farms' needs for reproduction. After the end of the enforced procurement, often no grain was left to feed the members, the horses, or to secure the sowing for the next harvest.

In the summer of 1930, it would have been possible to halt the forced collectivization: the good harvest proved that small-scale private farms were still capable of producing, although market relations had been destroyed. The critical loss of animal traction power happened only afterwards, inside the collective farms. With the start of liquidating the most successful farmers, the social costs were already high, and the destruction of the animal stock started. It would have

65 Merl, Stalin: Vor Erfolgen.

been possible to procure grain through compulsory deliveries, but the needs of reproduction would have had to be considered, and incentives would have had to be provided to increase production.

Already in the fall of 1930, Stalin ordered the collectivization to be taken up again. It took place with the same repressions against the peasants. Even the »liquidation of the *kulak* farms« and the deportation of their families were repeated, as they had proved to be the most effective means to push the peasants into the collective farms.[66] Nobody was interested in the question of where these new *kulaks* came from, after their »liquidation as a class« had already taken place at the beginning of 1930. In the following years, the authorities continued to declare further peasants as *kulaks*, aiming to intimidate the other peasants and prevent them from leaving the collective farms.[67]

Grain to feed the members was the most crucial point, as due to severe overpopulation, the collective farms could offer their members seasonal work at best. To survive, however, everyone needed food, regardless of whether their work was necessary for production. The collective farms had a fixed number of workers, whereas state farms hired labor only during the seasonal peaks of work. Already after the 1931 procurement campaign, there was a need to transport some grain as »seed loan« back to the collective farms, otherwise they would not have been able to cultivate their fields.

Stalin's quick policy changes concerning the »voluntary principle« disturbed the peasants and contributed to breaking their resistance. The terror has now reached all farms. Only in the national districts bordering Soviet territory, especially in the Caucasus and Central Asia, armed conflicts against collectivization continued. Most incidents, classified by the secret police as »terror acts,« were rather helpless reactions of those peasants previously hit by expropriation. This does not mean that there was no peasant resistance against collectivization, but rather that it occurred at the beginning of state terror in 1929 and early 1930; afterwards, it became the peasants' fight for their bare survival.

The enormous loss of livestock between 1928 and 1933 best illustrates the extent to which peasant »resistance« and other factors played a role. The killing of livestock can be seen as resistance. Some animals, indeed, were killed by the farmers, but most cows and traction animals perished for other reasons for which only the state was responsible, mainly due to the lack of fodder. The data on the number of livestock during collectivization provides quite reliable information on the reasons why and how the animals perished. The time of their perishing reveals a lot. Those perishing during the early period in 1929 and 1930 were more

66 Merl, *Bauern*.
67 Ibid.

likely to be slaughtered by the peasants in resistance to the threatening expropriation; those perishing between 1931 and 1933 primarily perished due to the lack of fodder. Food was scarce, and millions of people died in the famine.

While they often slaughtered farm animals for meat, the peasants tried to keep cows and traction animals (horses and oxen) as long as possible. Only a few of these were killed by the peasants. Poultry disappeared in the countryside first, most already during the first state attack on the peasants in early 1928. Pigs and cattle (other than cows) were slaughtered with the start of enforced collectivization in 1929 and early 1930. The peasants did not want to give their animals to the collective farms. Until January 1930, the number of pigs had already been cut in half (to 52% of the number from 1928). 35% of the cattle without cows were slaughtered in 1929, and in 1933, only 47% of the stock of 1928 were left. But cows (the milk needed for the kids and thus for the survival of the family) and traction animals (necessary for survival by cultivating the fields) were kept alive as long as possible. The number of cows was only down to 87% in January 1930. Two-thirds of the cows were still alive in early 1933. Only about 10% of the horses perished in 1929/30. However, by early 1933, the number of horses had been cut in half; most had perished within the collective farms between 1930 and 1932 due to a lack of fodder. Enforced collectivization caused chaos; nobody had clear ideas about the organization of work, and the responsibility for feeding the animals was unclear, as fodder and food were in extremely short supply and insufficient for all to survive.[68]

A real rupture in Stalin's agricultural policy happened only when the catastrophe of the 1932/33 famine could no longer be avoided. Now, Stalin sought a compromise with the peasants, opening up a possibility for them to survive while maintaining state control over *kolkhoz* production. Stalin essentially reverted to a tax in kind, in the form of obligatory deliveries, disguised under a symbolic payment far below the costs of production, but accompanied by the guarantee of a private plot.

In the spring of 1932, Stalin was not yet fully aware of the extent of the catastrophe. He was still convinced that it would be possible to procure the required amount of grain, and that it would be sufficient to provide the peasants with more incentives and a guarantee of some payment for their work, thereby fulfilling the high procurement plan. With the decree of May 6, 1932, the local markets were newly legalized, now called »*kolkhoz* markets«. This was combined with pressure: the local markets should be allowed to restart operations from January 15, 1933, only after the regional procurement plan was fulfilled.[69] In July 1932, advance

68 Merl, *Die Anfänge*, 220–29.
69 Merl, Der Holodomor.

distribution in kind was announced, bound to the number of labor units earned, thus establishing the principle of payment by the work done. During threshing, 10–15% of the threshed grain should be distributed according to the number of »labor units« received until that time.[70] Due to the terror under the condition of the famine, both decrees became effective only after the 1933 harvest in 1933/34.

Stalin's first measure in understanding the emergency of a threatening famine was his decree »for the protection of socialist property« from August 7, 1932. It declared the production of collective farms as »socialist property«. Stalin had personally designed this decree to secure the poor harvest primarily for the state. In addition, via »Torgsin« (the state agency for trade with foreign people), the selling of bread and flour in exchange for gold started. In 1932/33, grain against gold was also offered to starving peasants in the countryside.[71] Although Stalin had grasped how serious the situation was, he nonetheless stated in public that only malicious saboteurs starved by hunger, and that this was the proper punishment for them.

The return to tax in kind was decreed in January 1933. For collective and private farms, the obligatory delivery of grain was introduced by hectare norms, starting with the 1933 harvest. Obligatory delivery norms were also imposed on the private plots of collective farm members. They had to deliver half the norms effective for private farmers.[72]

Although Stalin copied Lenin's policy turn of 1921, he did not admit this. He never confessed that forced industrialization with collectivization had caused famine, as this would have put his rule at stake. He denied the famine and blamed it on sabotage. The peak of repression was reached only by his order to introduce internal passports and to arrest peasants trying to flee from the hunger regions.[73] Although speaking of a famine was taboo, Stalin later ordered the blame to be placed on the leading workers of the Ministry of Agriculture »for counterrevolutionary activity« in Ukraine, the Northern Caucasus, and Belarus, »organizing famine.« The court was held against them, and many were shot. They were accused of destroying tractors, agricultural machinery, and sowing weeds on the fields.[74] Only in 1988, for the first time, did the »Pravda« admit the existence of famine in 1932/33.[75]

70 Merl, *Die Anfänge*, 327–91. Before, distribution often followed demand (very high, as many members were hardly needed for doing the work). However, more and more frequently, the members got nothing as the state took everything.

71 Osokina, *Stalin's Quest.* Merl, Der Holodomor, 187.

72 Merl, *Bauern*, 129–58.

73 Merl, Der Holodomor, 190–93.

74 Ibid., 192. Cf. *Tragediya*, Vol. 3, 7–48 (Introduction by I. E. Zelenin). Among those shot was Mikhail Volf, the vice minister of state farms.

75 Danilov, Kollektivizatsiya.

The three elements, effective from 1933 onwards, the obligatory deliveries, the guaranteeing of a private plot, and the advanced payment in kind during threshing, may be called »the establishment of the *kolkhoz* system«. They were part of the compromise imposed by Stalin in response to the famine of 1932/33, which ended his previously arbitrary policy. This compromise stabilized the collective farms at least temporarily. In 1935, on Stalin's order, an attempt was started to consolidate the land of the collective farms by giving them state certificates over the land »for eternity«.

The private plots allowed the members to produce some basic food themselves. After discussing the size of the private plots with Stalin at the second conference of collective farm shock workers in January 1935, the size was standardized to 0.5 ha (with regional differences between 0.25 and 1 ha), and the right to a plot was confirmed in the collective farm statute of 1935. Many plots were slightly enlarged. Growing grain was not wanted, but some members used plots to grow corn. With the opening of the *kolkhoz* markets, the members were allowed to sell self-grown products for cash. As they got hardly any money for work from their collective farm, they earned this way the money they needed to pay taxes to the state and to buy other goods.[76] A certain amount of potatoes, meat (independent from keeping animals), and milk, if keeping a cow, had to be delivered to the state. They could keep all additional products for themselves or market them at a competitive price. As the obligatory deliveries made calculable what the members owed to the state, they provided an incentive to increase the production on private plots. The state provided support for purchasing young animals for fattening between 1933 and 1935, to replenish the stock of animals that had been significantly reduced during collectivization. Food production on the plots became essential for feeding the non-agricultural Soviet people with animal products, potatoes, and fruits, which were in extremely short supply in the state trade. Moreover, it provided the members of collective farms with more than half of their income.[77]

While Stalin had ignored the potential of small-scale private production at the end of the 1920s, he now recognized its value and confirmed the right to private plots after the famine. This allowed for the combination of forced labor on the collective farms with private self-exploitation on the private plots. Stalin finally understood that agriculture could not be run solely with violence and terror; the members of collective farms needed a perspective for survival. Although

76 Merl, *Bauern*, 281–94. Only cotton-growing collective farms in Middle Asia since 1935 have paid money to their members, after the state significantly raised the procurement price for cotton. In these regions, however, the members had to buy their food at high prices on the markets – cf. Merl, *Bauern*, 371–90.

77 Ibid., 404–17.

this combination of large-scale and small-scale production was a precondition for his system of collective farms to work, Stalin only tolerated private small-scale production without ending the ideological suspicion against this form. Khrushchev never grasped why Stalin had decided to accept it, and his ideological fight against private plots at the end of 1950 ultimately led to the failure of his agricultural policy.

»Advanced payment« during threshing provided the members of collective farms at least with some grain (and/or potatoes). Often, this was their only reward for work, as at the end of the agricultural year, hardly anything was left over for distribution. The members learned that labor units, until the harvest brought in some grain, were valuable; however, labor units after threshing were just lines on the paper with no value. Taking part in work on the collective farms was thus dramatically reduced after threshing.[78] The term »advanced payment« is misleading, as this was usually the only payment the members got from their collective farms.

As collectivization failed to secure the domestic food supply outside the urban areas, Stalin, at the end of 1933, »granted« a small allotment of land (between 0.125 and 0.25 ha) to everyone living in the countryside, to produce at least some food for themselves. *Kulaks* deported to special settlements got such an allotment as well, but not the forced laborers in the camps. Practically all non-agricultural workers and employees living in the countryside from 1934 onwards were required to produce part of their own food. Many of them also kept some animals. From 1939 onward, they were also required to deliver some potatoes as a form of tax in kind to the state. Only the state and the Party officials, and the intelligentsia, were freed from such obligatory deliveries.[79]

To conceal the failure of collectivization and the ongoing grain shortage in the country, Stalin ordered the falsification of the grain harvest statistics. Instead of the real harvest brought in (barn harvest), from 1933 onward, the data showed »biological« harvest, the grain ripening in the fields. It was about 30% higher than the real barn harvest. These 30%, however, could not be consumed or exported, as they never were brought in from the fields.[80]

Collective farms between the mid-1930s and Stalin's death in March 1953: blocking the options to exit

One of the widespread myths about Stalin's collectivization is »mechanization«. In reality, the level of traction power available in Soviet agriculture in

78 Ibid., 373.
79 Ibid., 320–26. In 1941, they held 4.9 million cattle, of them 3.5 million cows, and 2.7 million pigs.
80 Davies, Harrison, Khlevniuk, and Wheatcroft, *The industrialisation of Soviet Russia* 7, 320–21.

1929 was not restored until the end of the 1930s. While modernization would have required an increase in traction power, the delivery of tractors under Stalin only partly substituted horse traction power. In mid-1929, the total horse traction power was 29.9 or 30.1 million horsepower (23.6 million horses, 6.1 million oxen, and 35,000 tractors). At the end of 1935, there were 12.0 million horses, 2.6 million oxen, and 380,000 tractors (with 6.5 million horsepower). Depending on how mechanical traction power is converted to horse traction power, this was either 60% or, at best, 70% of the traction power of 1929.[81] The supply of tractors was strongly reduced after 1937. At best, by 1940, the traction power of mid-1929 had been restored; more likely, it was around 90%.[82] The significant shortage of traction power was responsible for the extremely low grain yields during the 1930s, which did not surpass or even match the yields achieved by small-scale peasant farms before. Often, the quality of fieldwork was low.[83]

Thus, traction power, despite the delivery of imported tractors, went down significantly at the beginning of the 1930s. Not »peasant resistance«, but the lack of traction power was the main reason for the poor cultivation of the fields. Weeds spread, causing additional problems for harvesting. The import of a large number of tractors in 1930 and 1931 was not planned before. It became necessary as the number of collective and state farms increased significantly, while many horses perished due to a lack of fodder. The import was detrimental to industrialization, as scarce currency had to be allocated for this purpose. Nearly all the currency earned from the export of grain in 1930 and 1931 – during the peak of forced industrialization – was used as an emergency measure to import tractors.[84]

The number of combine harvesters increased since the mid-1930s, but they primarily served to control grain harvesting.[85] In presenting mechanization un-

81 Merl, *Bauern*, 43–45. As the use of tractors is more limited (for example for transports), normally two mechanical traction power are calculated as one horse traction power. In this case, traction power was down to 60% at the end of 1935, if calculating 1 = 1, 70%.

82 Ibid., 44.

83 Merl, Reassessment, 51–53.

84 Merl, *Die Anfänge*, 214. With grain exports in 1930, 701.5 million rubles (147 per ton after 193 rubles in 1929) were earned, and in 1931, 523 million rubles (104 per ton). For the import of tractors and agricultural machinery in 1930, 382 million rubles (1929: 213 million rubles) were spent, and in 1931, 369 million rubles (only tractors: 240 million rubles) were spent. In 1932, the grain export provided 180 million rubles, in 1933, 139 million rubles; in both years, no tractors and agricultural machinery were imported. Justifying Stalin's collectivization with the need to finance industrialization by grain exports, Kondrashin (Kondrashin, *Rossiiskaya derevnya*, 535) ignores that most of the currency earned with grain exports in 1930 and 1931 was spent on the import of tractors and agricultural machinery.

85 Merl, *Bauern*, 45. On January 1, 1933, there were 2,200 combine harvesters; on January 1, 1936, there were 29,336. The mass of combine harvesters was provided only in 1936 and 1937, and by January 1, 1938, their number reached 104,864. After the start of forced collectivization, the focus in 1930 and 1931 had been on importing threshing machines. Their number increased from 2,900 in January 1931 to 27,800 in January 1932, reaching 78,000 in January 1935.

der Stalin as a success, it is often overlooked how heavily agriculture relied on transportation. It was done before by peasant carts and horse-drawn vehicles. The delivered caterpillar tractors were not suitable for transporting, but the number of trucks in agriculture remained nearly zero throughout the 1930s, increasing only from 200 in 1931 to about 75,000 in 1938.[86]

As the state did not pay for the work of the members and the prices for the obligatory deliveries did not cover the other production costs, the collective farms operated at a loss. Therefore, the state had to ensure that they did not engage in any non-agricultural activities. Due to the extreme shortage of services in the countryside, this would have provided the collective farms with comfortable incomes. They would have stopped all loss-bearing agricultural production immediately. Additionally, processing of agricultural products was not allowed to them, as the state financed a significant portion of its budget income through processing.

Soviet industrialization was firmly based on the transfer of capital from agriculture under Stalin. Additionally, in the 1930s, Stalin established a state monopoly on the processing of agricultural products. The state sold the processed products at high prices, including a turnover tax. This generated high profits and became the primary source of income for the state budget. As the tax was included in the state's selling prices, it was kept hidden from the people. Between 1934 and 1938, it made up about two-thirds of the total budget income. After the war, this was still more than half of the total budget income. After Stalin's death, the share of the transfer fell to about 5–10% of the budget.[87]

Under Stalin, the members of collective farms were treated as forced laborers. He deprived them of many civil rights. With the introduction of internal passports at the end of 1932, they lost the freedom of mobility. They needed permission from the local authorities to leave the collective farm for outside work. With the constitution of 1936, Stalin excluded them from the state social security. Their status now was close to serfs: they had to work on the collective farms without receiving real payment, they had no freedom of mobility, and lacked social security.

Towards the end of 1932, collectivization was widely finished in the grain-growing areas. By 1936, hardly any peasants who were still farming for marketing were left. The registered private farms were run mainly by elderly people who produced for their own needs and held only one hectare of land or less.[88]

86 Ibid., 43–45.

87 Merl, Wirtschafts- und Sozialgeschichte, 724–28. In the 1930s, the previous indirect tax on consumption became a »turnover tax« on processed food. State enterprises directly transferred this tax to the state as a »win transfer«.

88 Merl, *Bauern*, 251.

The subsequent significant rupture in Stalin's agricultural policy took place in connection with the bumper harvest of 1937. One should expect that a good harvest would stabilize the collective farms, but it put, on the contrary, their further existence at stake.

In 1937, the members in many grain-growing regions for the first time got a lot of grain during threshing. They won the impression that the worst was over and that they could leave the collective farms, imposed on them against their will, and return to private farming. Several members bought a horse and declared their exit. Disposing of a horse opened a lot of attractive side incomes. Transport and services were in very short supply in the Soviet countryside since collectivization and Stalin's ban against non-agricultural activities of the collective farms. Stalin was concerned that private agriculture could revive in the long run. He ordered restrictions to stop the exit. A special horse tax was introduced for the private keeping of a horse. The tax was so high that it ended the option to earn a living with a private horse.[89]

At the 18th Party congress in 1939, Stalin warned the Party members that the private plots could be used to re-establish private agriculture if the Party did not take special care against their »misuse«. After the congress, restrictive measures were introduced: the »surplus« sizes of the private plots were cut off, and a low minimum number of labor units was made obligatory for each household member. Those who did not provide this minimum number of labor days lost the right to have a private plot.[90]

The introduction of an obligatory minimum of labor days should combat the practice where members preferred to work on their plots to produce products for marketing instead of working on the collective farms. Behind the introduction stood no absolute lack of labor; the required number of labor days was therefore very low (60 to 80, only in regions growing cotton, 100 labor days), as the collective farms were only able to offer seasonal work.[91] The unwillingness of members to perform unpaid work on the collective farms should be addressed. Many members, especially males, needed to look for side jobs. Families with a lot of dependent people (kids, elderly) were in a miserable position in the collective farms. Even hiring workers from neighboring collective farms for money was a widespread practice. The collective farms were not allowed to pay their own members, while they could pay money to hired workers.[92]

89 Ibid., 156–58.

90 Ibid., 295–319. Merl, Reassessment, 59–60.

91 The allowance of non-agricultural side activities would have allowed for better use of the workforce.

92 Merl, *Bauern*, 383. To increase the interest in working on the collective farms, on the initiative of Khrushchev, a decree at the end of 1940 introduced premiums in kind for over–plan production – Merl, *Bauern*, 391–404.

The Party congress did not abolish the right to a private plot, but significantly weakened its legal position. While the state tax had been equal for all plots before, a progressive taxation of incomes from the private plots has now started. The equal tax had been a strong incentive to raise production on the plots by working more intensively with family labor, but it caused social differentiation among the members. The requirement of a minimum number of labor units for every member, especially hit the wives of the stakhanovites. They had not worked on the collective farms before, as their husbands earned a high number of labor units and got special rewards.[93]

A union-wide campaign against the »misuse« of the plots, a general remapping, started in July 1939. Additionally, the land allocated to workers and employees in the countryside was reduced to 0.15 ha, and they were now required to deliver a portion of their production to the state compulsorily.[94] This attack on the private plots caused the slaughtering of private animals and the clearing of fruit trees, and further deteriorated the already unsatisfactory food supply to the Soviet people.[95] In the Western regions near the border with Poland and the Baltic states, the liquidation of the khutors (individual farmsteads) was ordered. Here, the collective farmers still lived in isolation from one another. Together, all these measures were aimed at preparing for war.

After the German attack in 1941, rumors spread that the collective farms would be liquidated after the War. They were not officially denied in order not to threaten the unity of the people against the German aggressors. This underlines the extent to which the collective farms were not stabilized under Stalin. Many members still viewed them as a temporary institution and a hardship.

The victory over Germany strengthened Stalin's dictatorship and the myths of his infallibility. Despite the disaster that collectivization had caused and the miserable situation of the collective farm members, Stalin continued to put them under intense pressure. In the territories that temporarily came under German occupation, a re-collectivization process began, and in 1948, Stalin ordered the start of collectivization in the newly incorporated territories.[96]

High taxes, the repressive use of the »minimum of labor units«, and further restrictions against the private plots made living in the Soviet collective farms even more intolerable and miserable between 1947 and 1953 than during the second half of the 1930s. The distribution of labor days in kind and money was

93 Merl, *Sozialer Aufstieg*, 213–33.

94 Remapping hit especially regions from which migration to industry was strong. In these districts, no longer used plots had been taken over by people remaining in the countryside to produce additional fodder. In total, about 15% of the plot land was cut off: 50% of the land was held by individual peasants, and workers and employees had 30% of the land. Most of this land felt idle.

95 Merl, *Bauern*, 317.

96 Feest, The Collectivization.

lower than in the 1930s.[97] The strongest hit against the members was the 1947 »Currency reform« to devalue the money the peasants had earned and hoarded during the war by selling self-produced agricultural products.

The collective farms suffered from the lack of mechanized traction power and trailed implements. While industrial production in 1950 was already twice as high as it had been before the War, the MTS only restored its prewar level of mechanization in 1950.[98] Losses and falling out of order (also due to the lack of spare parts and competent repair) had been high during the war. In 1950, a significant number of defective machines was listed in the statistics.[99]

As long as Stalin was alive, there were no signs of a change in the agricultural policy. On the initiative of Khrushchev, only the enforced merger of the mostly small and village-bound collective farms started. Their number reduced from about 240,000 to 80,000 in the mid-1950s. This is based on Khrushchev's conviction that larger farms would provide economies of scale. The general assemblies of collective farmers often disagreed with the merger because it meant losing further control to an even more anonymous management.

CONCLUSION

Stalin had no concept of collectivization that he pursued from the beginning. He started from the idea of »modernization« to establish collective farms on large territories based on mechanized traction power. However, for him, the financing of forced industrialization took priority, and he decided to draw the necessary capital from agriculture. In 1929, Stalin shifted the focus of collectivization away from modernization to constructing large-scale mechanized farms and ordered wholesale collectivization based on peasant implements, aiming to squeeze capital out of agriculture by subjugating the peasants. Collectivization for Stalin had become a target on its own. A concession he made in March 1930 to the uprising of the peasant women should have become the precondition for his approach to finally work. He now abandoned the intention to liquidate private agriculture fully and allowed the members of collective farms to retain a private plot, a private cow, and a few other animals. After his policy caused the famine of 1932/33, Stalin established the »*kolkhoz* system«, a compromise with the peasantry, allowing the state to dispose over the production of the collective farms, while opening perspectives for survival for the peasants by prescribing a small, advanced payment in kind during threshing and by allowing to use family labor on the private

97 Bronson and Krueger, The Revolution.
98 Wädekin, *Sozialistische Agrarpolitik*, 87.
99 Merl, Why the Soviet Union, Vol. 5. Merl, Why the Soviet Union, Vol. 6.

plots. With the establishment of the *kolkhoz* system, Stalin, in principle, albeit without explicitly acknowledging it, revised his earlier assertion that small-scale peasant farms were unable to secure forced industrialization. Feeding the people after the 1932/33 famine depended heavily on private, small-scale agricultural production. Mechanization under Stalin primarily served state control over the collective farms and the peasants. He did not trust the peasants, ignored their great capacities for increasing production, and made the members of the collective farms forced laborers with limited civil rights. Stalin never resumed the modernization of agriculture. This would have required him to provide state investments to the collective farms. Although Soviet collectivization yielded inferior economic results, it was promoted to Eastern Europe as a successful model and an effective means of financing industrialization. Following Stalin's death, there was a pressing need to establish a viable model for stabilizing the collective farms.

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Stephan Merl

Collectivization and the Construction of Socialist Agriculture (1944–1992): A Reassessment in Entangled Comparison of the Soviet and Eastern European Experience

INTRODUCTION

To reassess collectivization and socialist agricultural policy, it is necessary to have the whole period in view, and to distinguish the following phases with basically different political approaches: 1/ Collectivization under the lead of Stalin based on class war and the subjugation of the peasantry to enforce a capital transfer from agriculture to industry; 2/ Collectivization under Khrushchev sticking

on finishing collectivization as a target on its own, although this policy had been basically put in question: in 1953 in the Soviet Union and in 1957 in the GDR and in Hungary; 3/ The efforts to stabilize the economically still weak collective farms in the 1960s after finishing collectivization and replacing Khrushchev; 4/ The final turn to modernize agriculture by concepts of industrialized agriculture in the 1970s, expecting economies of scale in agriculture; and 5/ The failure of these concepts, leading into a cost trap enforcing the rehabilitation of small-scale private agriculture in the 1980s.

The Eastern European Communist Party leaders took Stalin's propaganda as truth. They saw Soviet collectivization as a success and a model for overcoming rural underdevelopment and poverty by creating large-scale socialist enterprises, which, in turn, provided the capital for financing rapid industrialization. However, the Soviet collective farms were extremely weak economically until Stalin's death. They were poorly supplied with machinery by the state-owned machine-tractor-stations (MTS) and produced yields no higher than those of peasants in the 1920s. Stalin did not provide a model for agricultural modernization. His collectivization only subjugated the peasants within the collective farms to enforce the transfer of capital from agriculture to industry. How miserable the situation was, it remained taboo until his death. Stalin's attempt to prove the superiority of socialism over capitalism by lifting the food rationing in 1946 caused a new famine in the Soviet Union, costing the lives of about one million Soviet citizens.[1]

The deficiencies of Stalin's collectivization and the construction of socialist agriculture become most evident in comparison with the experiences of the Eastern European countries. Stalin's combination of collectivization with class war was copied in Eastern Europe, resulting in the same fatal consequences. Even the domestic food supply was endangered everywhere. In the following, I describe what collectivization in Eastern Europe under Stalin meant and the changes that started directly after his death. In the 1960s, after the completion of collectivization and the replacement of Khrushchev, it was first necessary to stabilize the collective farms. Only then could the modernization of agriculture by implementing models of »industrialized agriculture« start. They stood diametrically opposed to Stalin's collectivization: the capital flow had to be redirected to invest huge state funds in agriculture, and Stalin's ban on the non-agricultural activities of the collective farms had to be lifted, as it blocked the necessary integration of agriculture with the upstream and downstream sectors of industry.

The first section starts with defining the term »modernization«. Section two examines how Stalin intervened in the collectivization process in Eastern Europe

1 Ganson, *The Soviet Famine*.

between 1944 and 1953, and explores the specifics of his approach. The third section explains why and how collectivization was questioned immediately after Stalin's death, first by Lavrentiy Beria and Georgy Malenkov's »New Course,« and then by the uprisings in Poland and Hungary. These events led to proposals aimed at proving the superiority of the collective farms. Section four presents Khrushchev's insistence on finalizing collectivization (1957–1962), causing additional problems. He was responsible for the exodus of the better-qualified people from Soviet agriculture at the end of the 1950s. Sections five to eight examine the enormous efforts required to stabilize the collective farms after collectivization and to initiate the modernization of agriculture, with a delay of two decades compared to Western Europe.[2] Section five describes the basic policy changes necessary to stabilize the collective farms: the enlargement of the farms, the improvement of payment and social security to make work in the collective farms at all tolerable, the providing of managers and skilled labor indispensable for modernization, the lifting of Stalin's ban on non-agricultural activities of the collective farms, and finally the huge state investments into agriculture and the delivery of a large amount of machinery and equipment. Section six presents the concepts for industrialized agriculture for selected countries (GDR, Hungary, and the Soviet Union). Section seven focuses on the reasons why these concepts often fall into a cost trap, ignoring the specifics of concentration in agriculture and resulting in unproductive investments. Section eight focuses on the paradox: that socialist agriculture, initially intended to eliminate private production, in the 1980s ultimately returned to promoting small-scale private farming, as it was more cost-effective than large-scale socialist production. Section nine looks at the fate of »socialist agriculture« after the end of the socialist regimes and resumes on the advantages and shortcomings.

My contribution primarily focuses on the economic aspects of collectivization and »socialist agriculture,« as well as the goal of agricultural modernization. It draws on the collectivization experience in Eastern Europe to gain a better understanding of alternative solutions in the Soviet case.

Literature on East European agriculture after the Second World War

A comparison requires a valid basis of information on the single East European countries. My archival research primarily included the Russian archives, and some material from the archives of the GDR and Hungary. In addition, I have consulted the basic literature on collectivization and socialist

2 Cf. Wädekin, *Sozialistische Agrarpolitik in Osteuropa II.*

agricultural policy in Eastern Europe. Working between 1988 and 1991 as the successor of Karl-Eugen Wädekin at Justus-Liebig University in Gießen, and teaching »International agricultural policy«, I was directly involved in observing the process of the agricultural transformation in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union.[3]

K.-E. Wädekin provided basic research on the topic, with his two volumes on the Socialist agricultural policy: first, a comparative study covering collectivization in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe up to 1960, and second, a comparative study of socialist agriculture in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe up to 1976.[4] Both volumes also offer insights for comparing Socialist and Western agricultural policy. They still provide a helpful framework for comparison. My contribution updates this research by bringing in what we know today on Stalin's and Khrushchev's intentions and adding data on the development from the mid-1970s to the early 1990s, including the assessment of Socialist Agricultural policy from its end, looking at what happened to it in the transformation process to market economies in the 1990s.[5]

I want to mention three new studies that are essential for reassessing collectivization and socialist agricultural policy. Through his pioneering study on the specifics of collectivization in Hungary, Nigel Swain offered new sociological insights into the outcome.[6] Irodachi's and Bauerkämper's anthology provides several valuable country studies. Although most are limited to the period of collectivization until the beginning of the 1960s, some provide information on the stabilization of collective farms after collectivization and the outcome of socialist agricultural policy.[7] Zsuzsanna Varga recently published a study important for understanding the failure of socialist agricultural policy, covering the whole process in Hungary between 1948 and 1990.[8]

3 Merl, »Ja posledovatelno vnoshu svoy vklad.«

4 Wädekin, *Sozialistische Agrarpolitik in Osteuropa I*. Wädekin, *Sozialistische Agrarpolitik in Osteuropa II*.

5 In this article I use data on the 1970s and 1980s from my lecture series »Agrarsoziale Systeme der sozialistischen Länder Osteuropas« at the Rheinische Friedrich–Wilhelm–Universität Bonn in the winter term of 1990/1991.

6 Swain, *Collective Farms*. He also provided comparative studies on collectivization in Eastern Europe (Swain, Eastern European Collectivization) and on what happened after the end of the socialist regimes in four countries (Swain, Agricultural Restitution).

7 Irodachi and Bauerkämper (eds.), *The Collectivization*. The editors blame previous research of not having given the due attention to what collectivization meant for the peasants (4, 33). The contributions follow partly uniform questions (4–6).

8 Varga, *The Hungarian Agricultural Miracle?*.

1. COLLECTIVIZATION UNDER STALIN (1944–1953): A PROJECT TO MODERNIZE AGRICULTURE OR A FORM OF »SOCIAL ENGINEERING« TO SUBJUGATE THE PEASANTRY? ON MYTHS AND REALITIES

The results must be used to determine whether a »modernization« of agricultural production occurred. To speak of modernization, more is necessary than simply delivering mechanized equipment under state control or increasing farm size. It requires a visible increase in labor productivity, efficiency, and in plant and animal yields. Modernization strongly depended on utilizing scientific research to enhance farming techniques and on providing sufficient, high-quality equipment for complex mechanization.

Collectivization was not a project of »enforced modernization«, as Arnd Bauerkämper claims.[9] Stalin separated collectivization from modernization and made it a target in its own right, solely aiming to subjugate the peasants and transfer capital from agriculture to industrialization. Under Stalin, even permanent pressure and violence had to be exerted to prevent the collective farms in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe from collapsing.[10] When Lynne Viola speaks of collectivization as a means of »state building,«[11] this stands also against our knowledge and the facts: To keep rule and to construct the faith of his infallibility, Stalin needed to blame the local officials.[12] For this purpose, a well-functioning local administration would have been counter-productive. In popular thinking, the myth of the »good czar« ruling over incompetent and corrupt local officials was still deeply rooted. To keep and strengthen his rule, Stalin needed to blame the local officials for »mistakes«. Only this allowed him to avoid attention to his often-strong changes of course. Under pressure from Stalin, local officials were effective in forcing the peasants and then the collective farms to follow state orders.[13] To judge the local administration, it is necessary to ask whether Stalin's orders could be executed at all. Stalin liked to give orders impossible to fulfill. This was, for example, the case with his request that the peasants should »voluntarily join« the collective farms. No farmer, disposing of some implements and land, would voluntarily agree to work without payment on a collective farm and

9 Bauerkämper, *Ländliche Gesellschaft*, 14–15. He uses this term as a normative concept to describe the transformation of society.

10 Cf. my first article in this publication. In the Soviet Union, the bumper harvest of 1937 and then the Second World War caused exits and the falling apart of collective farms. In Eastern Europe, several collective farms fell apart after state violence stopped in June 1953 and then after the 1956 uprisings.

11 Viola, Collectivization, 50.

12 Cf. my first article in this publication and Merl, *Politische Kommunikation.*

13 Merl, The pre-1941 local administration. Cf. also my first article in this publication.

to become a forced laborer of the regime. If the officials failed to »convince« the peasants of joining, it was not due to their »incompetence«.[14] Standing before the choice to report success in fulfilling Stalin's orders or to »convince the peasants to do voluntarily what they did not want,« reporting success was always the better choice to avoid being suppressed oneself. In any case, Stalin had to avoid so that the people would trust the local administration.

Mechanization under Stalin did not serve »modernization«

In the West, mechanization began for economic reasons, due to the increasing cost of labor. It became a permanent process, steadily improving equipment and machinery to increase efficiency. Under Stalin, mechanization occurred despite considerable rural underemployment. With the concept of »taking grain« under Stalin, animal traction power was replaced. Mechanization was extremely expensive and even increased underemployment.[15] Ultimately, mechanization primarily served to enhance state control over the collective farms and their members.[16]

After starting production of tractors and some agricultural machinery to world standards in the 1930s, no permanent improvements took place. At the beginning of the 1950s, all agricultural machinery in the Soviet Union was already outdated by Western standards. Even worse, the Soviet Union did not take part in the »green revolution«, which made use of the progress in agricultural science and allowed the explosion of plant and animal yields.[17] To significantly improve the provided machinery, it would have been necessary to establish new construction sites for plant and, especially, for animal machinery and equipment.[18]

As in the Soviet Union, collectivization started in most Eastern European Countries before there was an economic need for mechanization. A shortage of rural labor existed only in the GDR and the Czech part of Czechoslovakia as early as the 1950s. At the same time, in all other Eastern European countries, as in the Soviet Union before, there was a substantial and depressing rural labor surplus. Nowhere had small-scale peasant farming reached its limits in terms of improving and increasing agricultural production. This became evident by the success of increasing agricultural output in Yugoslavia and Poland after they stopped collectivization. In contrast, all countries that continued with collectivization encountered problems, including difficulties in securing the domestic food supply.[19]

14 Cf. Merl, Stalin: Vor Erfolgen.
15 Cf. my first article in this publication.
16 Mechanized equipment therefore was provided only via the state MTS. The collective farms had to pay for their obligatory service in kind by grain.
17 Merl, Why did the Attempt.
18 Merl, Why the Soviet Union, Vol. 5. Merl, Why the Soviet Union, Vol. 6.
19 Wädekin, *Sozialistische Agrarpolitik in Osteuropa I,* 71–72. Wädekin, *Sozialistische Agrarpolitik in Osteuropa II*, 12.

However, not only was there no need for mechanization, but collectivization in Eastern Europe also began, despite the lack of sufficient tractors and machinery. Mechanized equipment for large-scale farming was in extremely short supply in the Soviet Union. Only in 1950 did the MTS reach the amount of equipment they had held in 1940, while industrial production had already doubled.[20] Some mechanized agricultural machinery existed only in the GDR and in the Czech part of Czechoslovakia, owned mainly by bigger farms and cooperatives.

2. COLLECTIVIZATION IN EASTERN EUROPE, 1944–1953: HOW STALIN INTERFERED AND WHY HARDLY ANY ACCOUNT WAS TAKEN OF THE SIGNIFICANT NATIONAL PECULIARITIES IN THESE COUNTRIES

After Stalin's victory over Fascism, the East European Party leaders were eager to copy his seemingly successful model: collectivization to finance rapid industrialization and to transform a backward countryside. How miserable the economic situation on the Soviet collective farms was, was at this moment placed under a taboo.

Start and timing – differences?

Independent of a signal from Stalin, collectivization started directly after the end of the War in Bulgaria and Yugoslavia. Both countries liberated themselves from German occupation forces independently, without the involvement of the Soviet army. Many peasants in this area actively participated in the partisan movement.[21]

While the collectivization campaigns in Eastern Europe all followed a similar scheme under Stalin, the collectivization process in Bulgaria differed significantly. It not only started earlier (1944), but was already, by the end of 1947, directed to »wholesale collectivization« (as in the Soviet case at the end of 1929), forcing all peasants of a village to join. Since March 1948, only one statue, similar to the Soviet *artel*, was allowed.[22] At the end of 1950, a peak was reached with about

20 Wädekin, *Sozialistische Agrarpolitik in Osteuropa I,* 87.

21 Swain, Eastern European Collectivization, 509–10. Tito started collectivization in 1945 expecting that the peasants would support it.

22 Gruev, Collectivization, 329–38. Since the end of 1944, »labor–cooperative farms« (TKZS) were organized, in 1948 already 400 TKZS existed. In the fall of 1947 compulsory deliveries were introduced, forcing the peasants to deliver practically all grain to the state. After joining, they only had to pay a tax for their private land.

50 percent of the peasant farms registered as members. However, as in the Soviet case, this caused heavy peasant resistance and several uprisings, endangering the rule.[23] On Stalin's recommendation, the collectivization campaign was halted. The Bulgarian Party leaders strongly criticized the local officials for »abuses«, as Stalin had done in March 1930. After the intervention, many collective farms disintegrated, but ultimately, the unrest subsided. Collectivization was halted, and a new policy was implemented: proceed slowly and apply no pressure to organize new collective farms.[24] The collectivization campaign was not restarted during Stalin's lifetime. Only under pressure from Khrushchev, Bulgaria restarted collectivization in 1956 and finished it first in Eastern Europe in 1958, without an interruption after the uprisings in Poland and Hungary.[25] In Bulgaria, the first Machine-Tractor-Stations (MTS) were organized in 1945, and even the collective farms received some machinery. In 1948, the MTS and the machinery were transferred into state property. In 1948, the MTS held 3,600 tractors, and in 1953, 11,300 tractors and 1,370 combines.[26]

In the other Eastern European countries, at the order of Stalin, collectivization as the final goal should not be mentioned during the land reform. He claimed that it would be necessary to win first the trust of the poor peasants and land-workers, and even stopped Communist Party Leaders who wanted to start collectivization immediately.[27]

In 1948, Stalin suddenly changed his mind. At the Cominform meeting in June 1948, he confronted Josip Broz (Tito), who had already started collectivization. But Stalin did not confront him for doing this without his order; he blamed Tito for underestimating the resistance of *kulaks* and for neglecting class war in connection with collectivization. Most East European Party leaders were used to guessing what Stalin wanted, as he seldom gave clear orders. They understood that Stalin now required them to start collectivization.[28] Only the GDR's SED (Sozialistische Einheitspartei Deutschlands) leadership got a different order in 1948. In connection with the political openness of the German question, Stalin

23 Ibidem, 346–56. Collectivization took place in waves: the campaigns were stopped when the resistance became too strong. Especially female peasants participated in the unrest as they had less to fear.

24 Ibid., 352–56. Blaming March 12, 1951, the lower officials of violence and arbitrariness, the Bulgarian Party leaders took the role of arbitrators and fair judges, as if this was a conflict between peasants and the local officials. The sudden retreat from enforced collectivization was proclaimed via Radio. For the Soviet case, cf. my first article in this publication.

25 Swain, Eastern European Collectivization, 499–501. Gruev, Collectivization, 358–68.

26 Wädekin, *Sozialistische Agrarpolitik in Osteuropa I*, 187–97.

27 Cf. as well Swain, Eastern European Collectivization.

28 Most Party leaders held faith in Stalin's infallibility and feared his revenge if they made the wrong choice.

required in December 1948 from Walter Ulbricht a »strategy of revolutionary hold back, to restrain from revolution and not to start class war against kulaks« and collectivization.[29]

Most campaigns started in early 1949. In general, the pressure on the peasants at the beginning was not too intense.[30] But when collectivization did not go as quickly as Stalin had expected, he intervened and increased the pressure on the Eastern European Party leaders. In 1951, Stalin ordered the proclamation of »class war« against the *kulaks* to speed things up. Arrests and mass repression increased, reaching their peak during the winter of 1952/53, just before Stalin's death.[31]

Ignoring the significantly different conditions in the Eastern European countries

In most Eastern European countries, relatively small land holdings dominated. Still, due to the expropriation and expulsion of the Germans, some countries had ample free land: the Czech part of Czechoslovakia, Poland, and Hungary. Most countries were at the very start of industrialization, as was the Soviet Union at the end of the 1920s, while others, such as the GDR and the Czech part of Czechoslovakia, had already been industrialized. All still predominantly rural countries suffered from rural underemployment, while the GDR and the Czech part of Czechoslovakia already felt a shortage of the rural workforce. All this must have had a significant influence on how collectivization could be approached, but Stalin ignored the different conditions and required the same approach everywhere.

To organize state farms, Czechoslovakia utilized the land from which the Germans had been expelled. Due to the significant share of arable land held by state farms, the government saw no need for rapid collectivization: the private farms should be allowed to develop further.[32] For this, it seemed possible to leverage the rich experience with rural cooperatives in the Czech part of the country. Only after the Communist *coup d'état*, Party secretary Rudolf Slansky changed this approach at the end of June 1948 and put – as other Eastern European countries – collectivization on the agenda. The campaign started in May 1949. Already

29 Scherstjanoi, *SED-Agrarpolitik*, 103–09, 591.

30 Thus, Hungary prepared its campaign in the fall of 1948 and started collectivization in 1949. Poland undertook its first careful steps in September 1948 and started to exercise more pressure in 1949.

31 Swain, Eastern European Collectivization, 525. The terror stopped shortly after Stalin's death.

32 Rychlik, Collectivization, 181–89. About 2 million Sudeten Germans were expelled. As there was no special request for land by the Czech people, much of the land confiscated in 1948 was used to organize state farms.

in July 1948, the first »people's cooperatives« and Machinery Lending Stations (MAS) were organized. In 1951, the MAS were converted into state enterprises.[33]

In comparison to ignoring these differences between the Eastern European countries, most points mentioned in literature as »different approaches in Eastern Europe«[34] are less critical or even misunderstandings. Land property, indeed, was not touched in most Eastern European countries. Only Hungary introduced »cooperative land property« in 1967, and Albania in 1946 de facto nationalized land property above 5 ha. Land property, however, lost its importance everywhere with collectivization, as the proprietors could no longer dispose of the land. It is correct that there were no »mass deportations« in connection with the class war. Still, deportations were practiced in some countries, and Stalin died before collectivization in Eastern Europe came into its final phase. Class war, however, took place in all countries to speed up collectivization. The assertion that more types of statutes with different amounts of collective use existed in Eastern Europe is misleading. In the Soviet Union, up to the end of 1929, there were three types of statutes; before then, wholesale collectivization started with only the *artel* statute. In the final phase of collectivization, Bulgaria and Czechoslovakia also had only one type similar to the Soviet *artel*. Only the GDR tolerated statues of type 1 and 2 with lesser collective use during the final phase and even after the end of collectivization in the 1960s.[35]

Common elements were more important: What did it mean that Stalin insisted on including a private plot in all East European statutes of thoroughly socialized collective farms (type 3), even when, as in the case of the GDR, the Party leadership refused at first? In the Soviet Union, private plots had been a precondition for allowing the state to dispose of collective farm production without risking the starvation of their members.[36] Seemingly, Stalin expected that the income distributed by the remainder principle would not be sufficient to guarantee the normal survival of the East European collective farm members if they did not have access to a private plot to grow additional food for themselves. At least one »learn effect« should be mentioned following the disaster of collectivization in the Soviet Union: several countries partially postponed the collectivization of their animals. They focused on the campaigns on plant production. Heavy losses of animals occurred in the Soviet Union during collectivization between 1928 and 1932, and again after land was taken from private plots in 1939–1940.[37] Similar severe losses of animals did not happen in any Eastern European country.

33 Ibid., 181–89. Bauerkämper, *Ländliche Gesellschaft*, 205–21.

34 Swain, Eastern European Collectivization, 502–04.

35 Hungary and the GDR offered three types, Romania only two. Albania postponed the collectivization of the animals. Cf. as well Wädekin, *Sozialistische Agrarpolitik in Osteuropa I.*

36 Cf. my first article in this publication.

37 Ibid. Khrushchev caused new losses with his campaign against the private keeping of animals.

Specific elements of Stalin's approach: the combination of collectivization with class war

Several features of collectivization under Stalin were stopped immediately after his death, especially his combination of collectivization with »class war,« and his social discrimination against the collective farmers. Class war with the destruction of *kulaks* to push the other peasants into the collective farms had been the key element under Stalin. Only Yugoslavia and China ignored this and tried to restructure agriculture »with significant peasant support«.[38]

All Eastern European countries started the »class war,« economically at first, requiring higher obligatory deliveries and taxes from the *kulaks*. This happened in Bulgaria in 1947 and in other countries in 1948. The GDR introduced different norms for obligatory deliveries by the size of the farm in 1946 and sharpened the differentiation in 1948/49. Yugoslavia started the economic attack on *kulaks* in June 1948, and Czechoslovakia followed in 1950.[39] Most countries – apart from Yugoslavia – put the further existence of *kulak* farms in question by 1951; the GDR followed in 1952.[40] Although the Soviet term *kulak* was unfamiliar, until 1951, nearly all countries started to use this term regarding their domestic big peasants.[41]

To what extent was »class war« ordered from outside by Stalin is visible from the fact that several countries did, at the beginning, not prevent *kulaks* from entering collective farms if they gave their means of production to them.[42] Only in connection with Stalin's order to speed up collectivization, a general ban against the admission of *kulaks* into the collective farms was introduced. *Kulaks*, accepted before, were now expelled. Several countries introduced – as Hungary in 1951 – »*kulak* lists,« listing every farm classified as a *kulak*. These lists spread additional anxiety. After starting show trials against *kulaks* in June 1952 in Czechoslovakia, the number of collective farm members had doubled by the end of the year.[43]

The combination of »class war« with collectivization was Stalin's unique approach. It allowed officials to exercise pressure and frighten peasants at the same time, as there was no clear definition of the *kulak* and how he exploited others. This had been the case in the Soviet Union in the late 1920s and was now also the case in all Eastern European Countries.[44] Just this »lack of precision concerning

38 Swain, Eastern European Collectivization, 505.
39 Ibid., 518–19.
40 Ibid., 505, 516–20, 525.
41 Ibid., 516. In the beginning, local terms were often used.
42 Ibid., 517–20.
43 Wädekin, *Sozialistische Agrarpolitik in Osteuropa I,* 153.
44 Merl, *Der Agrarmarkt.* Cf. also my first article in this publication. For Eastern Europe cf. Swain, Eastern European Collectivization, 516.

who the class enemy was« was the core, making class war a perfect weapon for a seemingly »voluntary« collectivization. Due to the arbitrariness of the term, every peasant opposing collectivization could be labeled as a *kulak*. Not being willing to join a collective farm was used as a criterion. The fear of being declared a *kulak* was the most efficient way to push the peasants into the collective farms. They watched with their own eyes what happened to them: they were subject to arrests, show trials, expropriation, expulsion from home and farm, or even deportation[45]. Even without »mass deportation« in Eastern Europe, the punishment of *kulaks* was effective in horrifying the other farmers.[46]

Although Stalin required over and over again the »voluntariness« of joining a collective farm, he did not intervene against the widespread mass repressions and arrests in the winter of 1952/53. Also in Poland, at the beginning of 1953, 254,000 peasants were in prison or punished.[47] This brought the mood of the peasants into conflict with the Communist regimes.[48] Officials not willing to participate were suspected of being themselves »class enemies« or counterrevolutionaries. Thus, they had no alternative but to put pressure on the peasants. Stalin urged the local officials to find always more *kulaks*, if more were needed to exercise pressure on the other peasants.[49] After Stalin's death, class war and anti-*kulak* policies quickly disappeared from the agenda. In 1954, the GDR and Hungary announced that they would end the restriction against *kulaks*; in general, they finally disappeared towards the end of the 1950s.

How Stalin interfered in Eastern Europe: the case of the GDR

Historians often expected to find clear orders given by Stalin. Because such orders are missing, they argue that the action took place against Stalin's will. This overlooks how Stalin ruled and how he cultivated the myth of his infallibility: Often, he issued rather vague orders, forcing those who had to execute his will to determine for themselves what he truly wanted. This allowed him, in the event of failure, to blame them, despite their adherence to his orders, and to adjust his approach. Stalin also employed this tactic, working closely with Eastern European

45 Deportations were executed for example in Romania, but less often than in the Soviet Union. In Czechoslovakia, repression against *kulaks* included resettlement or being driven out of their homes and farms. In Hungary, some *kulaks* were deported into labor camps – Swain, Eastern European Collectivization, 520.

46 Ibid., 520.

47 Jarosz, The Collectivization, 124–25. For Hungary and the GDR see below, and Transcript of the Conversations between the Soviet Leadership and a Hungarian United Worker's Party Delegation in Moscow on 13 June 1953 – Ostermann, »This is not a Politburo, But a Madhouse«.

48 Swain, Eastern European Collectivization, 505, 516–20, 525.

49 Ibid., 519.

Party leaders to make them dependent on him. His orders were sometimes contradictory and not consistent over time.

In a few cases, we have today more exact knowledge about Stalin's interference. Thus, a detailed study of the Soviet interference is available for the Soviet Occupation Zone in Germany and later the GDR.[50] Stalin's orders sometimes confused the SED leadership. In December 1948, he had called for a strategy of »holding back« on the socialist revolution and improving the food supply for the people, competing with the western parts of Germany to demonstrate the superiority of the socialist side.[51] Yet, in April 1952, he seemed puzzled that there were still no collective farms in the GDR. Contrary to his warning from December 1948, he now blamed the SED leaders for not initiating a fight against the *kulaks* and for failing to organize collective farms.

The case of the GDR is of special interest. Due to the Soviet occupational regime, Soviet administrators and advisers were permanently present to provide advice and oversee the policies of the SED and the East German authorities. Besides Stalin's direct consultations with the SED leaders in Moscow in December 1948 and April 1952, indirect control and influence were exercised continuously. Usually, cooperation with Soviet officials within the framework of the Soviet Control Commission (SKK) and the Soviet Military Administration (SMAD) worked smoothly. In times of crises, as in 1952, however, the Soviets interfered strictly and took less account of the objections from the German experts. In December 1948, on Stalin's orders, they insisted on a law protecting land workers. Then, in the fall of 1952, they insisted on allowing private plots on fully collectivized farms (type 3).[52] The German side at first opposed allowing private plots. However, the SKK intervened and declared that the Soviet side would under no circumstances allow the nationalization of all cattle. They insisted on keeping a private plot on the collective farm.[53] It was allowed to keep 0.5 ha, two cows, and one horse or oxen.

50 Scherstjanoi, *SED-Agrarpolitik*. She wrongly expects »rational acting« and clear orders by Stalin. Some of her conclusions are, therefore, questionable. She states that there are only a few notes on the direct meetings with Stalin, and that the memorandums in the Soviet archives differed from those in the German archives (9–10).

51 Ibid., 107–09, 591–95. In 1948, the SED leaders were confused and asked after the meeting, what Stalin concretely meant by »too early«, and what would fit to the course he required. Wilhelm Pieck noted that the MAS should be nationalized, but according to the Soviet protocol, Stalin spoke against the nationalization. From such uncertainties arose a lot of problems in practice. Nobody dared to depart from Stalin's orders.

52 Ibid., 107–36, 605–06. In 1952, the SKK more often prepared decisions without including the German side, and the SED leaders were not able to clear things directly with the Moscow Party leadership.

53 Ibid., 404, 442.

On December 18, 1948, Stalin met the SED leaders in Moscow.[54] The meeting lasted 4 hours. Stalin still expected it to be possible to enter talks with the Western powers about the future of Germany. He raised strategic questions in connection with the big farmers. Ignoring the last statements of the SED leaders, he commented on older papers, in which they had expressed plans to expropriate the big farmers. Stalin disagreed strongly and ordered an end to expropriations: Control over private enterprises must be won through different means. Germany should not go directly to socialism, but zigzag. Blaming Ulbricht, he required control of the private farms through economic, rather than administrative, measures.[55]

Stalin's next meeting with the SED leaders took place on April 1, 1952. Since mid-1951, the class war had also gained importance in the GDR. The big farmers were now blamed for all deficiencies in the food supply to the people. Scherstjanoi speaks of a »hysteria of sabotage,« ignoring Stalin's warning from 1948.[56]

To the surprise of the SED leaders, Stalin raised in the meeting the question whether collective farms existed in the GDR. Following his advice in 1948, the SED had waited with socialist construction and blocked the organization of collective farms.[57] When the SED leaders denied the existence and Ulbricht explained that they had not organized collective farms in order not to put the unity of Germany in danger, Stalin reacted in upset. He blamed the SED leaders for failing to establish producer cooperatives among farmers, and suggested studying the positive experience of Hungary in this regard.[58] This revealed primarily to what extent Stalin was ignorant about the situation in Germany's agriculture, and how strongly he trusted in doubtful success reports given to him by other Party leaders, such as Mátyás Rákosi. Only after this meeting with Stalin did the SED leaders start to prepare collectivization.

Not understanding that the strategy change was Stalin's aim with blaming the SED leaders, Scherstjanoi interprets the attack on the large private farmers in November 1952 as »a stubborn act of the SED leadership,« ignoring Stalin's warning of 1948. As Stalin did not intervene, there may be no doubt that he had wanted the SED to proclaim the »liquidations of the big farmers as a class«.[59] In 1951, Stalin had pushed ahead with similar attacks on the *kulaks* in all other Eastern European countries. The fact that he sent Aleksej Stupov, the official responsible

54 Ibid., 103–53. Wilhelm Pieck, Otto Grotewohl, Walter Ulbricht, Fred Oelßner on the German, Josip Stalin, Vyacheslav Molotov, and Vladimir Semenov (the chief of the SMAD) on the Soviet side took part in the meeting.

55 Ibid., 32, 104–05. Stalin gave no detailed instructions. He did not oppose against a law to confiscate not cultivated land and to force the peasants to cultivate their land.

56 Ibid., 594–98.

57 Ibid., 423–24.

58 Ibid., 355–56.

59 Ibid., 594–601.

for making recommendations to the Bulgarian leaders, to the GDR proves that he wanted the GDR to start collectivization and a class war.[60]

In April 1952, Stalin warned the SED leaders that the joining of collective farms had to be »strictly voluntary«. This is another example of his strategy to blame them afterwards. The collective farms had nothing to offer the GDR's peasants, who were able to cultivate their own fields. Their »voluntary« joining was not possible.[61] Following Stalin's recommendation, the SED leaders sent a delegation to Hungary.[62] Stalin's main concern in April, however, had not been collectivization but the urgent building up of an army in the GDR.

Before the SED leaders could announce the start of collectivization at the Second Party conference, they had to beg for Stalin's approval. They sent a letter to him on July 1, and Stalin's approval arrived on July 8.[63] The resolution suggested organizing collective farms primarily in regions from which big farmers had flown. It especially forbade competition between areas for the highest speed. At the Party conference, Ulbricht proclaimed that organizing the peasants in collective farms was part of the »planned construction of socialism«.[64] Strong pressure was now exerted on big farmers. The Soviet side contributed to exacerbating the problem by insisting on an increase in the obligatory delivery norms for them in 1952. Many of the big farmers lost the perspective to continue farming. Blamed for sabotage, they were expropriated under the accusation that they had not cultivated their fields properly. Many flew to the West. Since September 1952, the share of peasants among the refugees has increased significantly. Between January and June 1953, among the 11,000 fleeing farmers were 5,873 big farmers. The number of larger farms fell by about 40%.[65]

60 Ibid., 361, 368. Stupov took over the lead of the new SKK section for agriculture in May 1952. The disturbed SED leaders hold consultations with him to find out what Stalin had concretely meant by »encircling« the big farmers. They decided to send two delegations to the Soviet Union to study production and life on the Soviet collective farms.

61 Copying Stalin's strategy to afterwards blame the local officials for using violence, the Politburo stressed the »absolute voluntariness« of joining a collective farm.

62 Ibid., 360–67. Bauerkämper, *Ländliche Gesellschaft*, 160–65. Ulbricht went to Budapest with a delegation. They attended lectures at the Hungarian Party High School, met Mátyás Rákosi, Ernö Gerö, and András Hegedüs, and took excursions to collective and state farms. They did not recommend copying the Hungarian statues.

63 Bauerkämper, *Ländliche Gesellschaft*, 160–65.

64 Scherstjanoi, *SED-Agrarpolitik*, 380, cf. also 371–73, 379.

65 Ibid., 172–89, 485–501. Steiner, *Von Plan*, 67–68.

Who joined, and what convinced a peasant to join?

In all Eastern European Countries, primarily the rural poor, peasants without implements, new peasants struggling to cope with production, and agricultural workers joined. The collective farms disposed of land but lacked implements and machinery. As the Soviet Union sent very few machines, all countries expropriated machinery from big farmers or cannibalized, as in Hungary and Bulgaria, existing cooperatives.

Everywhere, the farmers were skeptical about joining. After the first farms were organized, the problem became even stronger. Now the miserable situation of the collective farms became evident to everyone: there was a lack of machinery and implements, competent leadership, and, above all, payment for work. In practice, in all countries, the economic results of the collective farms were inferior to those of the small peasant farms. Such collective farms had nothing to offer to the farmers. Even severe outside pressure from taxes and compulsory deliveries had only limited success.[66] Only the expropriation of *kulaks* and mass arrests in the last days of Stalin's life pushed many unwilling farmers into the collective farms.

In some countries, such as the GDR (as well as in Poland and Hungary), there were people familiar with the miserable situation in the Soviet collective farms. They had witnessed starvation and poverty in the Soviet countryside with their own eyes and assessed Soviet collectivization as a social disaster, combined with their personal experience of hunger. In addition, Russian forced laborers on German farms during the War had given very negative reports. This made the resistance even stronger.[67]

Hardly anybody from the local peasants who had lived in their villages for a long time joined. Often »new« peasants, receiving land only with the land reform after the Second World War, were more willing to participate as they lacked farm implements and sometimes experience, not coping with stabilizing their new farm. In the GDR, approximately 30% of the new peasants were unable to cope, and many of them subsequently returned their land. Only one-third of them stabilized their farm successfully. 20,000 of the farmers who joined had high debts and tried to get a new chance this way.[68] Whether the title to the land was »old« (inherited) or »new« had a strong influence on the willingness to join.[69] As in Poland, tensions developed between displaced farmers from the east who were

66 In the GDR, most farmers joined only under severe pressure. Between January and May 1953, the number of collective farms increased from 1,906 to 5,074 – Steiner, *Von Plan*, 73–74.
67 Bauerkämper, Collectivization, 411–25.
68 Steiner, *Von Plan*, 67–68. Cf. also Witkowski, Collectivization, 478–84.
69 Swain, Eastern European Collectivization, 509–13.

resettled and farmers who had been living in the villages beforehand.[70] In the GDR, tensions arose between the resettled »new peasants« (from territories lost in the east) and the »local peasants,« as the newcomers primarily consisted of the former.[71]

As hardly any farmer joined voluntarily, the local authorities exercised – against official orders – considerable pressure. State pressure was likely the most brutal in Romania, but also in Bulgaria, which included, besides arrests and show trials, deportations and death sentences.[72] Brutal repression caused severe and sometimes armed resistance. In Bulgaria and Romania, the resistance locally escalated to uprisings and revolts, affecting several villages. Often, female peasants who had less to fear played prominent roles in the protests.[73]

The supply of mechanized equipment was insufficient. The governments, therefore, supported collective farms with privileges and sometimes subsidies, and their norms of obligatory deliveries were lower than those for other peasants. In the spring of 1949 in the GDR, machinery lending stations (MAS) were established, but only every second MAS had a tractor. In 1949, the Soviet Union provided 1,000 tractors and 540 trucks to improve its equipment. In 1950, the MAS were nationalized. Their technical equipment was still terrible, and many tractors could not be used.[74] In the early 1950s, the MTS held 18,400 tractors, another 21,383 tractors were on private property, with 13,000 of them owned by big farmers. In January 1953, local officials gained the authority to compel their owners to lend them to others. In 1953, the MTS increased its machinery by 28%. Labor and investment were still in short supply.[75] In Hungary, it took a decade after the finishing of collectivization in 1961 for »most farms to have fully mechanized cereal production and invest in large animal barns«.[76]

Since most collective farms produced poor economic results, collectivization endangered the domestic food supply in all countries. Czechoslovakia and the

70 Jarosz, The Collectivization, 114–19. In Poland, about 1 million peasants received land by the land reform, 620,000 of them in the »rewon« territories.

71 Schöne, Ideology, 150–52.

72 For example: Bulgaria: death sentences and 4,208 families deported between 1948–1951, in 1951 show trials and many arrests (Gruev, Collectivization, 345, 354–55). Romania: 2000 families expropriated with holdings over 50 hectares. 1951 deportations from border regions to Yugoslavia, 44,000 persons resettled in special villages after violent riots (Irodachi and Dobrincu, The Collectivization, 255, 263–64. Cf. also Witkowski, Collectivization, 486–90. Swain, Eastern European Collectivization, 522–25); GDR: 1949 show trials against cooperative chairmen (Scherstjanoi, *SED-Agrarpolitik,* 292–316); Czechoslovakia: show trials (Wädekin, *Sozialistische Agrarpolitik in Osteuropa I*).

73 For example: Romania: several uprisings in 1949–1950 and 1958 (Swain, Eastern European Collectivization, 522–25); Bulgaria: July 1950, female uprising in 3 catholic villages (Gruev, Collectivization, 352–56); Poland: armed bands, resistance was based on Catholic Church, Women: praying in the fields, religious songs, leaving meetings (Jarosz, The Collectivization, 131–34).

74 Scherstjanoi, *SED-Agrarpolitik*, 110–45, 317–44, especially: 321, 330.

75 Ibid., 485, 605.

76 Swain, *Collective Farms,* 28.

GDR had to reintroduce or maintain food rationing. After the small-scale peasants had nearly restored the prewar level of food supply, the collectivization campaigns caused a new reduction in production.[77]

Peasant reaction: outmigration from the countryside

Members of collective farms in Eastern Europe reacted to the lack of payment for their work in the same way they had in the Soviet Union in the 1930s. They showed little interest in working on the farms. Instead, they tried to find paid work outside or focused on working on their private plots. Even in the countries with a labor surplus, such as Hungary, Bulgaria, and Romania, the peasants reacted in the same way. The collective farms had difficulties finding volunteers for work and complained about the lack of laborers, but they neither offered paid work nor were they able to provide full-time jobs year-round. As the farms were not allowed to engage in non-agricultural activities, they were unable to make productive use of their labor surplus. Work peaks were during sowing and harvesting.[78]

Throughout the entire collectivization period, low and insecure earnings pressured male workers to leave the countryside and seek employment in urban areas. Often, only women became members while men left the collective farms.[79] When tractor columns had taken over the work on the fields in 1928–1929, the Soviet peasant had reacted in the same way.[80] Outmigration in most Eastern European countries was easier and not limited to big farmers. Males left the countryside after the start of collectivization in the early 1950s. Then, even more so after 1957, collectivization contributed to accelerating the previously slow and reluctant outmigration of the workforce into cities.[81] The elderly and women dominated the workforce of the collective farms.

77 Schöne, Ideology, 151. Rychlik, Collectivization, 193–97. Ö. Kovács, The Forced Collectivization, 217–20. Bauerkämper, *Ländliche Gesellschaft*, 170. Witkowski, Collectivization, 483–84. Wädekin, *Sozialistische Agrarpolitik in Osteuropa I*, 155. Czechoslovakia returned to rationing in 1951, which was lifted before in 1948.

78 Swain, *Collective Farms*. For Poland – Jarosz, The Collectivization, 130. For Hungary – Ö. Kovács, The Forced Collectivization, 215–16.

79 Wädekin, *Sozialistische Agrarpolitik in Osteuropa I*, 139–48, 159. Swain, *Collective Farms*. For example, in Czechoslovakia, often only one family member joined. In 1961, at least one family member worked outside the collective farm in 52.7% of member households.

80 Cf. Merl, *Die Anfänge*. Cf. also my first article in this publication.

81 Wädekin, *Sozialistische Agrarpolitik in Osteuropa I,* 136. Gruev speaks of the »depopulation of the villages« after collectivization – Gruev, Collectivization, 359–60.

The problem of cultivating devastated land

In the GDR, several peasants did not cope with the high norms of compulsory deliveries and left their farms. The amount of land no longer cultivated increased, and nobody was willing to take over, as high norms of obligatory deliveries were laid on it. The increase of the delivery norms in 1952 aggravated the problem: Now many big farmers fled over the open border to West Berlin. In the Czech part of Czechoslovakia and partly in Hungary, the issue of unused land was caused by the expulsion of the Germans. Still, the effect was the same; the land felt idle, and nobody was willing to cultivate it.[82]

While Czechoslovakia used this land to organize state farms, the GDR organized temporary »public agricultural enterprises« (ÖBL) and employed agricultural workers to cultivate it. The devastated land contributed to sharpening the problems with the domestic food supply, as it had lower fertility, suffering from the previous lack of care.[83]

The SED leadership's attempt to convert the ÖBL into collective farms between 1952 and 1955 sparked heavy protests from agricultural workers, as this meant the loss of their secure monthly wages and social privileges as workers, including the 8-hour workday, paid vacation, and payment during illness.[84] Even with the guaranteed minimum level of 7 D-mark for the labor unit, this meant a substantial reduction from their previous monthly wages in the ÖBL. This highlights the unattractive nature of working on collective farms compared to working as agricultural laborers on state farms in Eastern Europe. The situation for GDR members of collective farms was even better than for those in other Eastern European countries, where there was no guaranteed minimum value for labor units.

Instead of modernizing agriculture: claiming a tribute for industrialization

Copying Stalin, all countries implemented collectivization as a strategy for rapid economic development by transferring capital from agriculture to industry. Even the GDR, under pressure from Stalin, prioritized industrialization at the expense of agricultural development. Investment in agriculture between

82 Cf. GDR: Bauerkämper, *Ländliche Gesellschaft;* Scherstjanoi, *SED-Agrarpolitik*, 594–97. Czech land: Rychlik, Collectivization, 193–95. Hungary: Varga, The Appropriation, 437.

83 Bauerkämper, *Ländliche Gesellschaft*, 170. Scherstjanoi, *SED-Agrarpolitik*, 172–89. Steiner, *Von Plan*, 67.

84 Bauerkämper, *Ländliche Gesellschaft*, 386–89. Many agricultural workers migrated to industry in protest. This caused a lack of workforce on the ÖBL. From 1954 to 1957, the annual turnover rate of agricultural workers was 15–20%.

1951 and 1955 was below the level of 1948–1950, while investment in industry climbed strongly, especially investment in the raw material industry. This had fatal consequences for agriculture. Instead of providing financial support for the collective farms, »an additional withdrawal of means of investment« took place.[85] For Stalin's collectivization without providing state funding, Swain introduced a fine term: »collectivization on the cheap«.[86] Although the amount of this capital transfer decreased after Stalin's death, it continued under Khrushchev and was not finally stopped until the 1960s, after his replacement.

3. PUTTING COLLECTIVIZATION IN QUESTION: JUNE 1953 TO 1958

Collectivization as a »success model« was first put in question in the Soviet Union. The new Soviet leaders were unwilling to pursue Stalin's collectivization policy further. Several Party leaders around Stalin were aware of the miserable economic results of the collective farms. They were convinced that only a fundamental change in agricultural policy could save the situation, but they could not act as long as Stalin was alive.

After Stalin's death, they competed with each other to become his successor. They did not trust each other. Everyone understood that whoever implemented a successful economic program would win. Therefore, the objective of the game was to obstruct the implementation of their rivals' programs. Given these conditions, it was impossible to have a serious discussion about the best agricultural policy to increase production.

The first attempt for a policy change was the »New Course« of the economic policy, designed mainly by Beria and Malenkov. In early June 1953, the new Soviet leaders ordered the Party leaders of the GDR and those of Hungary to Moscow. Collectivization in both countries had strongly deteriorated the domestic food supply, and they had requested grain help from Stalin. They were not prepared for what they experienced in Moscow: The new leaders put the correctness of Stalin's orders in question; in other words, they declared that Stalin was not infallible. And they harshly criticized the policy of Ulbricht and Rákosi, although both had only followed the orders from Stalin. The Hungarian delegates were afraid – as before with Stalin – to misunderstand or misinterpret important »recommendations«. They therefore decided to make a stenographic record of the speeches of

85 Scherstjanoi, *SED-Agrarpolitik*, 159–60, 348, 478–84. Moscow was not willing to make concessions in armament, reparation, and foreign trade.

86 Swain, *Collective Farms*, 28.

their Moscow colleagues. This provides us with a unique insight into the discussions at the meeting and the views of the new Soviet leaders.[87]

The critique addressed central aspects of Stalin's industrialization and collectivization policies, as well as the extent of state violence employed to implement them. Primarily, Malenkov and Beria criticized the focus on investment in raw material industries, Stalin's orientation toward autarky, and the enforcement of collectivization through mass repression and the arrests of farmers, with the consequence that agricultural production was reduced and the domestic food supply was endangered. The new leaders refused to provide any grain help. They made the GDR and the Hungarian leaders responsible for the situation. They ordered to stop collectivization with mass repression immediately, to release the ten thousand arrested farmers from the prisons, and to pursue the policy of securing the domestic food supply and increasing agricultural production.[88]

The new Soviet leaders were no longer willing to tolerate the economic mismanagement of the Eastern European countries caused by collectivization. Walter Ulbricht and Rákosi now stood in the center of the critique, and the new leaders required their replacement. They replaced Rákosi with Imre Nagy, who then implemented a significantly different agricultural policy in Hungary. The intended replacement of Ulbricht did not take place due to the uprising of the construction workers in Berlin on June 17, 1953.[89] They went on strike because they did not benefit from the relief ordered. The increase in their work quotas was not reversed, which resulted in a significant reduction in their pay.

The signal from Moscow was that collectivization should no longer be a target in itself, and that its economic effects had to be considered. Beria and Malenkov claimed that collectivization required economic justification. Further collectivization should depend on the economic results: The collective farms should prove their superiority over small-scale private farms. Contrary to Khrushchev, they focused on intensifying agricultural production in Soviet agriculture.

At the moment of Stalin's death, it would have been possible to stop further collectivization completely and to liquidate the Soviet collective farms, which were still showing miserable economic results. But there was no concrete discussion

87 Ostermann, »This is not a Politburo, But a Madhouse«. Cf. also Merl, Entstalinisierung, 205–07. From the transcript, it becomes evident that Stalin had previously given his orders personally to the East European Party leaders, without informing the other Moscow Party leaders.

88 Ostermann, »This is not a Politburo, But a Madhouse«. Merl, Entstalinisierung. Scherstjanoi also reports on the visit of the SED delegation in Moscow, June 2, 1953. The delegation was confronted with a resolution to improve the situation in the GDR requiring stopping the collectivization campaign, returning the expropriated land to the big farmers, and cutting their norms of compulsory deliveries by 15% – Scherstjanoi, SED-Agrarpolitik, 552–84.

89 Scherstjanoi, *SED-Agrarpolitik*, 552–84. After the return from Moscow, Rudolf Herrnstadt, the possible successor of Ulbricht, proposed to liquidate those collective farms that were enforced, organized, and lacked an economic perspective, and to stop their special subsidies and privileges.

towards that end. China later decided to liquidate the people's communes. The success of China's approach, which became the starting point of China's economic progress, suggests that the Soviet economy would have benefited from the liquidation of the collective farms. In 1953, life on Soviet collective farms was so miserable that liquidating them would free up significant activity from former members. Already, the liberalization of agricultural policy between 1953 and 1958 led to a substantial increase in private plot production, improving the food supply in the Soviet Union. This is overlooked in most literature, uncritically following Khrushchev's propaganda of the success of his Virgin Land program.[90]

After the interference of the new Moscow leaders, collectivization was stopped in the GDR and Hungary. In both countries, several collective farms were liquidated, and many members, who had been forced to join before, declared their exit. Until February 1954, 564 collective farms were liquidated in the GDR, and 33,000 members declared their exit. A considerable number of arrested peasants were released. In the GDR, expropriated land was returned to those former proprietors who returned from the West.[91]

Stalin's death led to a shift in collectivization policy in many other Eastern European countries as well. Everywhere, further collectivization was now pursued with less speed and repression. Without openly speaking about it, the Party leaders now separated class war from collectivization. Hungary and Czechoslovakia stopped following the actions against *kulaks*. This did not directly end their discrimination. In Hungary, for example, after Khrushchev ended the New Course in 1955 and replaced Nagy, measures against *kulaks* restarted. Only after the October uprisings in 1956, was their discrimination finally stopped. It took until 1959 for former *kulaks* in Hungary to be allowed to take over leading positions in the collective farms after two years of membership. The GDR allowed *kulaks*, with restrictions, to join collective farms in December 1954, but this had little practical significance until 1957. In July 1956, Bulgaria permitted *kulaks* to join collective farms, but did not grant them access to leading positions. In Poland, *kulaks* were allowed to join if they behaved loyally to the rule. Czechoslovakia even admitted them to the leadership of collective farms.[92]

Not all members of the new Soviet leadership group stood behind the New Course. Khrushchev took the Berlin uprising of the construction workers as a

90 Merl, Entstalinisierung. Wädekin, *Sozialistische Agrarpolitik in Osteuropa I*, 228.

91 Scherstjanoi, *SED-Agrarpolitik*, 570–84. Steiner, *Von Plan,* 79–81. Varga, *The Hungarian Agricultural Miracle?*.

92 Swain, Eastern European Collectivization, 506–07. Wädekin, *Sozialistische Agrarpolitik in Osteuropa I.* In Czechoslovakia, the New Course caused the collectivization process to stagnate. Between 1953 and 1956, about half of the members of collective farms left. Then, on June 29–30, 1955, the Party, under pressure from Khrushchev, decided to restart collectivization. – Wädekin, *Sozialistische Agrarpolitik in Osteuropa I,* 197–98.

sign of its failure and blamed Beria, its main initiator, for the uprising. On this basis, he started his intrigue to arrest Beria. He organized the July plenum of 1953 of the Central Committee as a trial against Beria. He succeeded in restoring supreme power to the Party, whereas Malenkov and Beria had attempted to transfer it to the state organs.[93] Malenkov was at this Plenum one of the few Party leaders honestly distancing themselves from Stalin, while Khrushchev even tried to blame Beria for being responsible for Stalin's crimes.[94]

In September 1953, Khrushchev took over the initiative in agricultural policy. He revealed in public that Stalin had not solved the »grain problem« but only ordered to falsify the grain statistics; a fictive »biological« harvest was introduced in 1933, about one third higher than the previously (and normally) reported »barn harvest«, pointing out the »grain problem« still existed: 30% of the reported grain did not exist.[95] This prepared his strategy to focus on his fight for power on »solving the grain problem« by starting the Virgin Land campaign. The promise to raise grain and agricultural production was Khrushchev's choice to become Stalin's successor.

After removing Beria, Khrushchev successfully obstructed Malenkov's program to improve consumption. None of the other leaders could imagine that he would be successful in implementing a new agricultural policy.[96] The pretended »success« of his Virgin Land Program strengthened Khrushchev's position in the competition already in 1954.[97] Malenkov failed to implement his program due to obstruction by the other leaders. In January 1955, Khrushchev was able to remove him. He now stopped the New Course and insisted on restarting the collectivization campaign in all Eastern European countries. In Hungary, he removed Nagy from office, who had successfully relaxed the situation in the countryside, and replaced him with Rákosi. This contributed to the forthcoming split of the Hungarian Communist Party and the uprising in October 1956.

93 Merl, Entstalinisierung. Merl, Beschluss. At the Plenum, the need to reform agricultural policy was the only topic on which all agreed.

94 Merl, Beschluss. Cf. on Khrushchev as well Merl, Entstalinisierung, and Kramer, The Changing Pattern.

95 Davies, Harrison, Khlevniuk, and Wheatcroft, *The industrialisation of Soviet Russia 7*, 321–22. Merl, Entstalinisierung.

96 Merl, Entstalinisierung.

97 Ibid. Merl, Reassessment. In the long run, this was a failure. An independent cost–benefit calculation reveals that the expenses were not justified. The massive supply of equipment would have shown much greater effects in the Central Black Earth Regions without claiming the enormous costs of rail transportation of grain from distant regions. At the turn of the 1960s, wind erosion did considerable harm, and since the mid-1960s, the Soviet Union even depended on grain imports from the West for the rest of its existence.

Khrushchev's insistence on finishing collectivization

Despite the disastrous results, Khrushchev persisted in implementing collectivization. He did not require that the collective farms prove their superiority first. In his understanding, already a simple enlargement of the farm's size or the change to state property would provide economies of scale and increase yields. In the Soviet Union, he initiated the reorganization of collective farms and advocated for their conversion into state farms. To praise the achievements of Soviet collectivization, hardly visible in practice, he even ordered the production of a special propaganda booklet for the 1958 World Exhibition in Brussels.

Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Bulgaria, and Albania took up collectivization at the turn of 1956. Even Poland restarted collectivization in February 1956.[98] Only Bulgaria and Albania did not stop collectivization after the uprisings in Poland and Hungary. With his resistance against Wladyslaw Gomulka to become the successor of Boleslaw Bierut in Poland – as the Polish communists wanted – Khrushchev also contributed to the uprising in Poland. Gomulka's view on collectivization differed from his.[99] The uprising in Poland and Hungary was related to a protest against collectivization. Some collective farms were spontaneously liquidated by their members. In Hungary, their number has reduced dramatically. In Poland, only 11% of the peasants had previously joined collective farms. In the fall of 1956, a significant number of the members declared their exit. In open contradiction to Khrushchev, Gomulka stopped the enforced collectivization and declared a national way to Socialism in late 1956. Like Tito before him, he did not put large-scale mechanized »socialist« agriculture as the final goal in question, but refused to force the farmers to join by executing terror against them.[100]

1957: Requiring an open competition between collective and private farms

Unlike Khrushchev, who insisted on continuing collectivization without first stabilizing it, Hungary and the GDR attempted to stabilize their collective farms after June 1953 by improving the members' material situation and providing them with more agricultural machinery. Czechoslovakia also changed its approach, providing investment and improving the situation of the members. I will first examine the proposed strategy changes that were not implemented due

98 For Hungary, cf. Varga, *The Hungarian Agricultural Miracle?*, 78–83.

99 Merl, Entstalinisierung. Swain, Eastern European Collectivization, 501–02, 525–26. Following the uprisings of 1956, pressure to collectivize was reduced in Czechoslovakia and Romania as well. Yugoslavia had already stopped collectivization in 1953.

100 Swain, Eastern European Collectivization, 525–26. Varga, *The Hungarian Agricultural Miracle?*, 83–97. Merl, Entstalinisierung.

to Khrushchev's insistence on completing collectivization, and then consider the measures taken to stabilize the situation, despite Khrushchev's pressure, especially in Hungary, but also in the GDR and Czechoslovakia.

The uprisings in Poland and Hungary have forced a review of further collectivization. The collective farms in all countries were still working poorly. Despite subsidies and privileges from the state, they were unable to surpass small peasant agriculture. The need to take the economic results of the collective farms into account was newly expressed. In 1957, rethinking began, especially in Hungary and the GDR, with the aim of eliminating special subsidies and privileges for collective farms. They were to prove their superiority over small private farms through open competition before collectivization could proceed. The critics of collectivization came from agricultural specialists this time, practically all members of the ruling Parties. They were concerned about the dismal economic results of the collective farms (which they had previously supported) and requested a moratorium. When the collective farms had proved their superiority, this would impress and convince the private farmers, and collectivization could be finished.

In the GDR, such a program of open competition was developed by Kurt Vieweg (1911–1976), the head of the GDR Institute of Agrarian Economics, in 1956. He called for the stopping of subsidies for the collective farms. The focus of agricultural policy in the future should be on increasing production at »optimal costs«. The state should halt pushing agricultural reconstruction forward at any cost. Vieweg required to provide equal chances to family farms. They should be allowed to buy means of production and to organize traditional peasant cooperatives to improve their farming. State subsidies should be used only to increase production and productivity; prices in agriculture should be economically regulated. *Politburo* member Fred Oelßner held a similar position and demanded to liquidate collective farms and MTS, working with losses. Both were repressed on behalf of Ulbricht. Vieweg lost his position as head of the research institute as early as March 1957 and was sentenced to 12 years of imprisonment in May 1958; Oelßner was excluded from the *Politburo* in February 1958.[101]

Similar ideas were developed by the »agrarian lobby« in Hungary. Among them were Lajos Fehér and Ferenc Erdei, taking up approaches from Nagy in 1953 and 1954.[102] In Czechoslovakia, Antonin Zápotocký followed a similar position.[103] All claimed that definite changes to Stalin's model were necessary and

101 Bauerkämper, *Ländliche Gesellschaft*, 176–81. Cf. on Vieweg's concept: Scholz, *Bauernopfer*.

102 Varga, *The Hungarian Agricultural Miracle?*, 107–45.

103 Wädekin, *Sozialistische Agrarpolitik in Osteuropa I,* 197–98. Zápotocký stood against Antonín Novotný. After Stalin's death, he demanded to organize collective farms only where they provided economic efficiency. The members should be allowed to leave these farms. In March 1954, he repeated his proposals, but Novotný blocked a policy change in June 1954.

stressed that the precondition for a successful restart of mass collectivization would be to first stabilize the existing collective farms by transforming them into models of mechanized agriculture. This would then convince the farmers to join. They recommended ways to stabilize the collective farms and proposed changing the attitude toward *kulaks* and other peasants who were not willing to become members of the collective farms.[104] In 1957, Fehér and others described the concept in their »agricultural theses«.[105] The collective farms should increase their economic results without special subsidies and privileges from the state. The material situation of the members should improve by allowing them to keep collective animals on their plots, while the collective farm should be obliged to provide the fodder.[106]

In the Soviet Union, where collectivization was implemented, the primary goal was to enhance the economic performance of the cooperatives. The Soviet »agrarian lobby« (including Vladimir Venzher and Ivan Khudenko) demanded the dissolution of the MTS and the transfer of mechanized equipment to collective farms, thereby making the latter the »masters of their fields«.[107] In the mid-1960s, Khudenko required to release state and collective farms from state command and to allow their heads (directors) to organize the production on their own.[108]

Attempts to stabilize the collective farms in Hungary after June 1953

Returning from the meeting in Moscow, Nagy revised Hungary's agricultural policy, and a temporary relaxation took place. He tried to strengthen the collective farms that remained after the wave of exits. Many of them did not dispose of the necessary means of production. In 1954, for the first time, a significant portion of Hungary's investments (23%) was allocated to agriculture. The collective farms got more tractors in this one year than during the whole period

104 Swain, *Collective Farms,* 3. Varga, *The Hungarian Agricultural Miracle?.*

105 Varga, *The Hungarian Agricultural Miracle?*, 107–14. In conflict with the Ministry of Agriculture, the agricultural experts developed the final version of their theses in July 1957. They required an end to the disadvantageous treatment of agriculture in relation to industry, to improve the living standards of the members, and to partially rehabilitate the market. The establishment of large–scale farms should primarily become a means to develop the agricultural production forces. They complained about the slow progress in modernizing agricultural production and the outdated nature of agricultural machinery. Cf. also Varga, *The Hungarian Agricultural Miracle?*, 118–29, on the top-level debates on the eve of the restart of collectivization.

106 For more details, see Swain, *Collective Farms*, 33.

107 Merl, Why the Soviet Union, Vol. 5. Merl, Why the Soviet Union, Vol. 6. Khrushchev spoiled Venzher's idea by requiring collective farms to pay the state the full cost of machinery directly.

108 Merl, Agricultural reforms.

of collectivization under Stalin (between 1950 and 1953).[109] When Khrushchev ended the New Course, he replaced Nagy with his Stalinist predecessor Rákosi, who restarted the enforced collectivization in 1956. This led to a disaster: the uprisings in October and the Soviet military intervention.[110]

The uprising and the falling apart of collective farms caused a new rupture in agricultural politics. János Kádár's approach was more careful. Temporarily, Nagy's »spirit of reconciliation« shaped the policy of his regime. In 1957, he abolished the compulsory deliveries and paid attention to the »agrarian theses,« proposing a different concept for further collectivization. However, in 1958, under pressure from Khrushchev, Kádár restarted enforced collectivization. After a new failure, he soon returned to his more careful approach.[111]

In any case, Kádár reduced »the costs of joining a collective farm«. A rent was introduced for using the implements and land of the members, and ideological attacks against the private plots were reduced.[112] The concessions to utilize family labor on the plots were a decisive factor, as incentives to work on the collective farm were still widely lacking; they were unable to provide an equivalent to the income from family labor.[113] It was not until the 1970s that collective agriculture in Hungary gained a solid financial foundation. The concessions to private plots under Kádár were crucial during the period between 1959 and 1961, when collectivization was fully implemented. The government was now ready »to provide sufficient funds to cover the costs of collectivization« and a sound production base.[114] Agriculture »was no longer treated as a branch of the economy out of which surplus had to be extracted for industrial development«, but it got at least some finance and capital to transform its production base. Concessions were made towards middle peasants and *kulaks*. The material situation of the members improved with the »revised household plot regulations«.[115]

Hungary made political compromises. It supported household plot production as compensation for the low payment for work on the collective farm. Collective farms first used sharecropping (although under strong ideological critique) in 1954–1955. Since 1956, it has been officially tolerated to raise the incentive to work. It addressed the quality aspects. The remuneration was based on a significant amount of the products produced, and it included market elements

109 Swain, *Collective Farms*, 28.
110 Varga, *The Hungarian Agricultural Miracle?*.
111 Ibid.
112 Swain, *Collective Farms*, 31–33. In 1948, 0.86 ha and animals were allowed for private use. In 1949–1950, the size was reduced to 0.43 ha, and the allowed amount of cattle was cut in half. In 1953, plots up to 0.57 ha were allowed.
113 Ibid., 33.
114 Ibid., 25–26, 29.
115 Ibid., 26.

because the members sold many of the agricultural products they received. It spread after 1957, when the collective farms had a lot of land per member. In Hungary, the wage share paid in kind was still relatively high in 1964. Finally, sharecropping was kept only for special products and in regions that were unpleasant for agricultural production. The plot contributed to retaining labor reserves in the countryside.[116]

Under Kádár, »collectivization was no longer seen as an end in itself, but as a method whereby large-scale agriculture would bring about an ever-increasing standard of living«.[117] It took, however, until the end of collectivization in 1961 and the replacement of Khrushchev in Moscow, until permanent progress in that direction could be reached after 1967. To this end, in 1956, the government began encouraging the amalgamation of collective farms to increase their size, thereby allowing them to rationalize production. This was financed by a concerted policy of aid directed towards the collective farms. After the liquidations of the MTS in January 1963, the collective farms were allowed to own capital equipment and some agricultural machinery.[118] Modernization was still a complex and lengthy process, which is evident from the fact that in the mid-1950s, the collective farms still predominantly used horse traction, and that manual labor dominated until the end of the 1960s.[119]

Stabilization of the collective farms in the GDR after 1953

After Stalin's death, the GDR also changed its collectivization strategy to stabilize the collective farms. The most important changes in 1954 touched payment and social security. In the thoroughly socialized collective farms of type 3, a state-guaranteed minimum value (7 D-mark) of the labor unit was introduced, and the members were included in the state social security system. Due to the low price the state paid for compulsory deliveries, most farms were unable to pay the minimum value, and the state had to provide subsidies to cover the shortfall.[120] The GDR increased producer prices, reduced obligatory deliveries, and paid fees for the implements that members had to deposit at the time of joining.[121] The Third conference of the collective farm members in December 1954 proposed to

116 Ibid., 48–49. Cf. also Wädekin, *Sozialistische Agrarpolitik in Osteuropa II,* 191–92 on the »Nádudvár–system«. Bulgaria and Romania employed a similar system, but instead of payment in kind, they paid a monetary wage based on the value of the produced products.
117 Swain, *Collective Farms*, 26.
118 Ibid., 36–37. Wädekin, *Sozialistische Agrarpolitik in Osteuropa I,* 174.
119 Swain, *Collective Farms*, 37–41.
120 Bauerkämper, *Ländliche Gesellschaft*, 166–67.
121 Swain, Eastern European Collectivization, 508, 525–30.

accept big peasants.[122] After Khrushchev stopped the New Course in 1955, new disturbances concerning the *kulaks* arose. Only since 1957 were they fully admitted, and the SED even expected them to contribute their expertise to stabilize the collective farms.[123]

The Third Party conference in March 1956 emphasized the need to strengthen collective farms with lasting economic benefits. It allowed the establishment of new collective farms of type 1 or 2 with a lesser level of socialization of the means of production, even in villages where a collective farm of type 3 already existed. This was a special concession to reluctant farmers to ease their joining, but at the same time, it saved the state money, as it did not have to subsidize the payment of the minimum value of the labor unit in these farms. For this reason, types 1 and 2 were tolerated after the end of collectivization during the 1960s.[124]

In October 1957, following pressure from Khrushchev to expedite collectivization, the 33rd Central Committee Plenum reaffirmed the goal of completing collectivization. Still trusting Khrushchev's promise that collectivization would increase production, it proclaimed the end of food rationing and the reduction of imports in 1958. At the 5th Party Congress in July 1958, following Khrushchev, Ulbricht also declared that the main task was to surpass West Germany's food consumption per worker within a few years. This over-stressed target caused significant pressure to act.[125] After July 1958, the SED increased pressure to join collective farms and sent industrial workers to the countryside for agitation.

Despite all efforts, the speed of collectivization had reduced by the end of 1958. The Party reacted by trying to agitate primarily the underrepresented small peasants to join. Ulbricht declared that the collective farms should be strengthened to provide the peasants with the same standard of living they had before as individual peasants. Since this had little effect, the SED returned to previously banned approaches. They pressured the farmers by asking the local administration to develop »perspective plans for collectivization« in their region.[126]

The stabilization of the collective farms in Czechoslovakia

With the restart of collectivization in Czechoslovakia in 1958, special attention was given to attracting middle and large farmers, who would relinquish authority in their villages, and to improving the situation of collective farm members.

122 Bauerkämper, *Ländliche Gesellschaft*, 174.
123 Ibid., 389–90.
124 Ibid., 175.
125 Ibid., 181–83.
126 Ibid., 384–89. Stalin had used similar methods of pressure in 1929, cf. my first article in this publication.

Since 1957, members have been included in the state health and social insurance system and have received old-age pensions. In exchange for giving their indebted land to the collective farm, farmers got a state pension: »Many kulaks took the chance to get rid of their farms for compensation«.[127] Collectivization was ended, not because the farmers were convinced, but because they understood that they had no alternative.[128]

After finishing collectivization, Czechoslovakia provided significant state subsidies to stabilize the collective farms and to consolidate their production. A relatively high standard of living without much worry in the countryside was reached. Professional managers took over the leadership and were primarily interested in the relaxation of state control and attractive prices. Under the influence of the state subsidies and investments, the look of the villages changed completely. Already during the 1968 uprising, there were no attempts to return to private farming. However, in the spring of 1968, the chairmen of the collective farms demanded, with some success, to reduce rigid state and party control and allow production of commodities for sale in the market.[129]

The industrialization of agriculture started at the end of the 1960s. The collective farms were subsequently converted into large agricultural complexes, sometimes encompassing several villages. In the Czech part, the medium size of a collective farm increased from 610 ha in 1970 to 2,459 ha in 1980. In the Slovak part, the farm sizes were slightly larger, rising from 832 ha to 2,720 ha. As the standard of living on the collective farms had become satisfactory by now, their members had become a social stratum standing loyal to the regime. In Czechoslovakia, the allowance for collective farms to engage in non-agricultural activities also played a crucial role in this. The statute of 1975 even allowed the production of goods, such as furniture, machinery, and computers. While this was initially seen as an exception, these opportunities have significantly increased since June 1988.[130]

Following the end of collectivization, the Party's attitude underwent a drastic change, and the collective farms were finally accepted by the farmers who remained in the countryside. In November 1989, the farm members did not participate in the uprisings. In the majority, they stood loyal to the regime and showed little interest in returning to private farming.[131]

127 Rychlik, Collectivization, 200.
128 Ibid., 198–201.
129 Ibid., 201. Merl, Why the Soviet Union, Vol. 6.
130 Rychlik, Collectivization, 201–03.
131 Ibid., 201–03.

Soviet Union: Khrushchev ignored the need to raise efficiency

When Stalin died, most Soviet collective farms were still extremely weak; they paid hardly any money for participating in the work, and the available machinery in the MTS was significantly below the Western standard and inadequate for large-scale production. Unlike the Party leaders in Hungary, the GDR, and Czechoslovakia, Khrushchev, in his struggle for power, prioritized increasing the quantity of grain production over raising its efficiency. Instead of providing machinery to existing collective farms, which were suffering from a severe shortage, he ordered that nearly all new machinery be sent to the Virgin Land.[132]

Khrushchev's attempts to improve the extremely low remuneration in the Soviet collective farms showed little effect compared to the GDR, Czechoslovakia, and even Hungary, which compensated for the low remuneration by tolerating activities on private plots. The increase in the agricultural producer prices was not significant enough to close at least part of the income gap for agricultural workers on state farms. Even most state farms in the Soviet Union continued to operate into the 1970s with losses.[133]

Khrushchev's agrotowns

Khrushchev's ideas about socialist agriculture were straightforward: large-scale production should provide economies of scale, allowing for similar living conditions in the countryside as those in urban areas. His concept of establishing »agrotowns« reveals how he envisioned socialist agriculture.[134] With the start of the enlargement of the mostly small collective farms in 1950, Khrushchev revived the idea of building agrotowns, which had been developed in the 1920s. After the merger of the farms into large-scale enterprises, this should become the final form of socialist agriculture. For them, a new type of rural settlement for 5,000 to 10,000 inhabitants should be built, equipped with all typical urban facilities. The costs to establish such new urban settlements should be borne by the large-scale enterprises themselves.[135] He ordered the creation of a model of such an agrotown in the Cherkasy rayon. The project was halted when Stalin rejected the idea of agrotowns in 1951. He harshly criticized Khrushchev for it. However, after he came to power, Khrushchev ordered the revival of the project in 1957 on the ruins left over from 1951. It was completed in the summer of 1958 in the village of Khudyaki.[136]

132 Merl, Why the Soviet Union, Vol. 5. Merl, Why the Soviet Union Merl, Vol. 6.
133 Wädekin, *Sozialistische Agrarpolitik in Osteuropa II.* Cf. also below.
134 Jähnig, *Die Siedlungsplanung.*
135 Ibid., 42–44.
136 Ibid., 45–47.

Planning for such future settlements in rural areas began in the mid-1950s. This raised the question of what should be done with the old villages, and what the living conditions of the collective farmers should finally look like. In Khrushchev's imagination, the comprehensive modernization of the rural economy and society was intended to eliminate private agricultural production and provide urban living conditions for rural people. The size of the private plots in connection with such settlements should be reduced to 0.1 ha. Sticking to »collectivization on the cheap«, he did not pay much attention to the costs (seemingly covered by the economies of scale). In December 1959, the Central Committee Plenum approved his plan, and the Party Program of 1961 gave general guidelines for the building of agrotowns, requiring the replacement of simple farmhouses with modern apartments in multi-story buildings. After Khrushchev's replacement, the program's implementation was finally halted in 1968. The most fateful consequence of this project was the splitting of the rural villages into »perspective« and »non-perspective« settlements.[137]

Towards the end of the 1950s, Khrushchev's failures culminated. He had miscalculated the extent of the Soviet achievements in mechanization. Not only was the level significantly below the Western standard, but the quality was even worse. After sticking to »collectivization on the cheap« before, he now overestimated the effect of economies of scale in agriculture and started »mechanization on the cheap«. Liquidating the MTS in 1958, he required the economically still weak collective farms to pay for the partly rotten machinery immediately the full price as for new machinery, to finance »his race to the Moon«. This over-strained the capacities of the farms. They were unable to pay for the urgently needed additional new machinery and were even forced to reduce the still meager payments to their members, after they had increased slightly after 1953.[138] The worst effect was that most tractor drivers, who had been taken on the MTS payroll in 1954, (similar to the GDR) did not want to return to the miserable status of collective farm members, paid in labor units. Most of them decided to quit their jobs and leave for the cities. The collective farms acquired tractors, but lacked sufficient trained personnel to operate them.

With the start of his campaign against the private keeping of animals and the private plots, Khrushchev made things even worse, causing the out-migration of those members of the collective farms who had hoped that the relaxation of the policy after Stalin's death would allow a return to private farming. The better-qualified and more flexible people left the Soviet countryside at the end of the

137 Ibid., 51–68.

138 Merl, Why the Soviet Union, Vol. 5. Merl, Why the Soviet Union, Vol. 6. Bronson and Krueger, The Revolution.

1950s. This significantly reduced the possibilities for a turn to modernizing agriculture after his replacement.[139]

4. FINISHING COLLECTIVIZATION AT THE TURN OF THE 1960S

Pressure to total collectivization was executed in the final phase, in Czechoslovakia in 1959, in the GDR in 1960, and in Hungary in 1961. Khrushchev enforced the restart of collectivization in Eastern Europe in November 1957. Bulgaria, not stopping its campaign in 1956, first declared collectivization finished in 1958. Czechoslovakia resumed collectivization with increased pressure at the end of 1957, following Antonín Novotný's appointment as president. In 1958, about 75% of the land was collectivized, and collectivization in the Czech part was declared finished in 1959.[140] In the GDR, collectivization increased between 1953 and 1958, only from 20% to 40%. After Gerhard Grüneberg became the secretary of the Central Committee for agriculture at the end of 1958, the campaign intensified. Finally, in early January 1960, a »socialist spring« was declared to end collectivization in a few months before the start of spring sowing. This underlined that the SED tolerated the execution of the campaign by force. Rigorous pressure was exerted on the officials, and the violence against the farmers reached its peak at the end of March 1960.[141] Contrary to Ulbricht's promise, the enforced collectivization threatened the domestic food supply, particularly with regard to animal products.[142] Hungary restarted collectivization at the end of 1958, determining February 1961 as the end of the campaign. »Psychological factors« played a role in finishing collectivization. After 1956, Hungary was a demoralized country, and more and more farmers resigned to the inevitability of collectivization.[143] In Romania, collectivization lasted until 1962. Collectivization in Albania was largely completed by 1960; however, in the mountainous regions, it was not fully implemented until 1967. The collectivization of animals was separate from the campaign and did not end until the 1980s.[144]

139 Wädekin, *Sozialistische Agrarpolitik in Osteuropa I*, 86.

140 In Slovakia, collectivization was finalized only between 1971–1974 – Ibid., 41.

141 Bauerkämper, *Ländliche Gesellschaft*, 185–91. At the agricultural conference in Moscow on February 2–3, 1960, Ulbricht declared that self-sufficiency in food could only be achieved through collectivization. His criticism pushed officials to act with force. The arrival of worker brigades in the villages caused psychological terror. The brigades left only after all the peasants had signed up to join a collective farm. According to SED slogans, joining stands for peace, while not joining stands for war – Swain, Eastern European Collectivization, 520–23. On the Moscow meeting, see also Wädekin, *Sozialistische Agrarpolitik in Osteuropa II*, 299–322.

142 Steiner, *Von Plan,* 116–19.

143 Swain, *Collective Farms*, 26.

144 Swain, Eastern European Collectivization, 525–26. Wädekin, *Sozialistische Agrarpolitik in Osteuropa I,* 41. The campaign in Albanie was interrupted between 1959 und 1965.

All these countries under Khrushchev exercised violence in the campaigns. However, they offered, different from the years under Stalin, some concessions to the farmers to make life in the collective farms more tolerable. »Class war« was no longer pursued; instead, the joining of *kulaks* was now seen as an advantage to manage the collective farms afterwards. After a decade of collectivization campaigns, the situation had undergone some changes. Some farmers looked at the future differently. The importance of education had increased, and the menace of not giving their children access to higher education seemed worse than stopping private farming. In addition, several farmers started to look at land as »a burden« and not as a source of prosperity, and resigned.[145]

In all countries that brought collectivization to an end, production remained firmly behind expectations. Between 1950 and 1961, the increase in agricultural production in these countries was significantly lower than the increase in Poland and Yugoslavia, which worked with small-scale private farms.[146]

In the GDR, collectivization was done (apart from some mountainous areas) in May 1960. While the collective farms held 25% of the land in 1957, this percentage rose to as high as 84% by the end of 1960. However, large-scale integrated enterprises were not established. Often, there were even several small collective farms of different types in one village. The number of collective farms of types 1 and 2 increased from 3,000 to 13,000 in early 1960; they held a third of the agricultural area. In both types, the collectivization of the cattle still had to be done. At the beginning of the 1960s, only 7% of the LPG type 3 farms were able to work without subsidies to pay the guaranteed minimum value of the labor unit. This highlights how economically weak even the GDR's collective farms were. Another feature of their instability was that some members declared their »exit« and left the villages. The SED sent brigades to consolidate the farms. After the border to the West was closed with the construction of the Berlin Wall, the situation in the collective farms slowly stabilized in 1963–1964.[147] In all Eastern European countries that had finished collectivization, farm machinery and implements were in short supply, the remuneration for work was miserable, and the economic results of the collective farms were hardly comparable to those of small-scale peasant farming. The supply of capital to agriculture until the early 1960s was insufficient to support large-scale production.[148]

Following the end of collectivization in Eastern Europe and Khrushchev's

145 Swain, Eastern European Collectivization, 525–30.

146 Wädekin, *Sozialistische Agrarpolitik in Osteuropa I*, 71–72. Wädekin, *Sozialistische Agrarpolitik in Osteuropa II,* 12. After 1956, Poland reached an impressive increase in agricultural production. In Yugoslavia, after the end of enforced collectivization, production increased significantly between 1953 and 1959, and then after 1963.

147 Steiner, *Von Plan,* 90–92, 116–19.

148 Wädekin, *Sozialistische Agrarpolitik in Osteuropa II*, 12–15. Cf. below.

replacement in the Soviet Union, it was therefore urgently necessary to stabilize the collective farms during the 1960s. Then, a new phase of socialist agricultural policy began: the turn to modernization, which involved implementing slightly different concepts of industrialized agriculture. They were all directed to bring agricultural production closer to the upstream and downstream sectors of the industry, encompassing the production of inputs for agriculture and the processing, storage, and trading of agricultural products. This was achieved by fostering cooperation and integration among the enterprises. In some countries, this continued to form agricultural-industrial complexes. Bringing industry and agricultural production closer together had been blocked before by Stalin's ban on non-agricultural activities of the collective farms, transferred to Eastern Europe, and not lifted under Khrushchev.

5. STABILIZATION OF THE COLLECTIVE FARMS IN THE 1960S AFTER THE END OF COLLECTIVIZATION

Enlarging the size of the collective farms

The collective farms organized during the campaigns were, in general, relatively small, holding only several hundred hectares, and often included only one village. Their enlargement by amalgamation began in the Soviet Union under Khrushchev's pressure in 1950. He expected the enlargement to provide economies of scale. After becoming Stalin's successor, he restarted the campaign, now combined with converting the enlarged collective into state farms. Apart from Hungary, which began the amalgamation of collective farms in 1956, most other countries started the process only after completing collectivization. Finally, the Soviet Union and the Balkan states, making more extensive use of the land, had the largest enterprises. Stronger industrialized countries, such as the GDR and the Czech part of Czechoslovakia, used the land more intensively, had the smallest farms, and considered 3,000 ha to 5,000 ha to be optimal. At the same time, Hungary and Poland formed a medium group between them. The average size of a collective farm in the Soviet Union and Bulgaria reached 6,000 ha in the mid-1960s. In the GDR, their size increased from 240 ha to 930 ha between 1960 and 1976; in Czechoslovakia, from 400 ha to 2,000 ha, and in Hungary, from 700 ha to 3,000 ha.[149]

149 Ibid., 38–40, 44–47.

In most countries, collective farms were smaller than state farms and less well-equipped with machinery. The difference was most substantial in the Soviet Union. However, the average size of state farms here reduced from 26,000 ha to 18,000 ha between 1960 and 1976, due to the conversion of collective farms into state farms under Khrushchev. In Romania, the size of state farms increased from 3,000 ha to 5,000 ha, and in Bulgaria from 5,000 ha to 6,000 ha. In Czechoslovakia, the medium size of state farms increased from 3,000 ha to 6,000 ha, and in Hungary, from 2,500 ha to 6,000 ha. In the GDR, state farms (mostly experimental or special enterprises) were the smallest and increased in size from only 600 ha to 1,100 ha.[150]

The share of state farms varied significantly between the countries. In the Soviet Union, due to Khrushchev's conversion of collective farms into state farms, their share increased from 37% in 1960 to 64% in 1976. In Czechoslovakia, their share increased from 15% to 20%; in Bulgaria, from 7% to 16%; in Poland, from 11% to 16%; and in Yugoslavia, from 5% to 12%. In Romania and Hungary, the share of state farms was kept stable at 12% to 14%, and it was the lowest in the GDR (an increase from 6.2% to 7.5%).[151]

The conversion of economically weak collective farms significantly increased the losses of the state farms in the Soviet Union, due to the low procurement prices paid by the state. In addition, the state now had to pay wages to the former unpaid members of collective farms.[152] The expected »economies of scale« were insignificant. Only one aspect of Khrushchev's calculation was better founded: Fewer collective farms meant less need for reliable chairmen, primary Party members, to run them. To strengthen the collective farms, he ordered 50,000 skilled workers to the countryside to assume positions in managing the collective farms. This should secure control for the Party and improve the management.

150 Ibid., 38–40.

151 Ibid., 38–40. Accordingly, the share of collective farms decreased: in the Soviet Union to 34%, in Bulgaria to 65%, and in Czechoslovakia to 61%. It increased in countries where collectivization had not yet been completed or was only recently finished in 1960: in the GDR from 73% to 82%, in Hungary from 49% to 70%, and in Romania from 50% to 54%. The share of the private sector decreased in the GDR from 19% to 9%, in Hungary from 32% to 15%, in Romania from 20% to 16%, and in Czechoslovakia from 17% to 8%. In Poland and Yugoslavia, the private sector remained above 80%. In Bulgaria, its share increased from 9% to 10.5%, while in the Soviet Union, it held only 1.4% of the agricultural area.

152 Ibid. Merl, Why the Soviet Union, Vol 5. Merl, Why the Soviet Union, Vol 6.

Paying for work on the collective farms and ending the social discrimination of the peasantry

All Soviet leaders saw the need to improve the income of the collective farms. But none of them, especially not Khrushchev, had an idea how much it would cost and how long it would take to raise their incomes at least to the wages of state farm workers. Although agricultural producer prices doubled in the Soviet Union in 1954, the effect on increasing the worth of the labor unit was minimal, and the improvement in remuneration under Khrushchev progressed only slowly after 1956. By forcing the collective farms immediately to pay for the MTS machinery, Khrushchev even caused a new reduction in the members' income.[153] Most Eastern European countries made more progress in improving remuneration, especially those with a shortage of agricultural labor, such as the GDR and Czechoslovakia.

Practically all countries stick to remuneration by labor units, which meant distribution by the »remainder principle«, introduced under Stalin in the 1930s, providing only at the end of the agricultural year a »win distribution« by the labor units earned. This meant very low and uncertain income.[154] A first step to improve remuneration was the introduction of »advanced payment«, one or several times a year, before the final »distribution«. It was practiced in the Soviet Union since 1933/34.[155] Many Eastern European countries introduced »advanced payments«, first one or several times a year, and finally, monthly. In the GDR, from 1959 up to 70% of the planned distribution was paid in advance. Hungary allowed the collective farmers to receive advanced payments in 1951; in 1955, the members gained the right to require them. In 1950, Romania permitted the distribution of up to 50 percent of the expected money income in advance, and Poland up to 60%. In the Soviet Union, since the mid-1950s, 50% of the expected distribution was paid out in advance.[156] After 1953, most countries began to substitute payment in kind with payment in money gradually. In Hungary, until the early 1960s, monthly wages were paid only in exceptional cases. They were finally introduced in 1966, based on roughly 80% of the calculated total yearly wage.[157]

Another way to improve remuneration was to work with a guaranteed minimum value of the labor unit. In the Soviet Union under Stalin, such a minimum value was paid from the collective farms' funds only to tractor drivers among the

153 Bronson and Krueger, The Revolution. Wädekin, *Sozialistische Agrarpolitik in Osteuropa II*, 187–88. Merl, Entstalinisierung, 212–25.
154 Cf. my first article in this publication.
155 Ibid.
156 Wädekin, *Sozialistische Agrarpolitik in Osteuropa II*, 114–23. Wädekin, *Sozialistische Agrarpolitik in Osteuropa I*, 235.
157 Swain, *Collective Farms*, 37–50.

members, and then to the chairmen. This reduced the distribution to the other members by the remainder principle.[158] The GDR paid a state-guaranteed minimum value of the labor unit since 1954 in full socialized collective farms. The state had to subsidize these payments, as few collective farms were able to cover them from their income. In 1962, following the end of collectivization, the GDR replaced the minimum value of a labor unit with a state-guaranteed minimum income of 3,120 D-mark per year. Members earning more than 8,000 D-mark a year were now progressively taxed.[159]

Only in the GDR did collective farm members reach an equal level of payment to industrial workers by 1964, whereas the income disparity to workers on state farms in Romania was still high in the early 1970s. Similar disparities existed in the Soviet Union and Bulgaria. In Hungary, the toleration of an additional income from family work on the private plots partially compensated for the low payments of the collective farms.[160] The Hungarian collective farms could avoid paying sufficient wages to their members by utilizing the peasants' capacity for »self-exploitation« on the private plots. They received relatively attractive and predictable rewards from working on their plots.[161] In most countries, it took until the mid-1970s to provide payment to collective farm members at the same level as to state farm workers. Reaching an equal level with workers in industry or transportation took even longer, if it was ever achieved. In the Soviet Union, this happened only in the 1980s. In Hungary, an equal level of payment to industrial workers was reached when monthly wages replaced payment by labor in 1977.[162] This highlights how miserable the payment situation was during collectivization.

The low incomes on the collective farms were partly due to the difficulty of providing work for their members throughout the year. Most members only had seasonal work. The very low number of requested »minimum labor days« reveals the extent to which the collective farms were unable to provide their members with work as long as non-agricultural activities were forbidden to them. When they were first introduced in the Soviet Union in 1939, only 60 to 80 labor days were required. In the 1950s, the GDR and Czechoslovakia required 150 labor days, Poland 100, and Hungary 80 in 1951, and 120 in 1955. After Stalin, the

158 Merl, *Sozialer Aufstieg*, 96–120, 166–81.

159 Wädekin, *Sozialistische Agrarpolitik in Osteuropa II,* 182.

160 Ibid., 182.

161 Swain, *Collective Farms*, 6–7, 51–79. Spending family labor on the private plots is not for profit maximization, but rather to balance the utility of output, irrespective of any national labor costs, and the disutility of having no labor at all, and »wage costs are not taken into account« – Swain, *Collective Farms*, 2–6.

162 Remuneration at Hungarian collective farms improved after collectivization ended between 1961 and 1968. Since then, work payments have been treated as production costs. Social mobility died down in 1977, and the collective farms reached relative stability – Swain, *Collective Farms,* 4, 53.

collective farms were often allowed to fix the minimum number themselves.[163] An obligation to provide full-time jobs to their members never existed.[164] In the Soviet Union, the average member reached only 200 working days in the 1970s, and in Romania, the figure was even lower.[165] In Hungary, only 59% of men and 12% of women of working age were employed full-time by collective farms. Most young men had left for industry, and the median age of the collective farm members increased to 54 years by 1967.[166] In reaction to this situation, in Hungary, »labor on the relatively non-mechanized household plots was no longer seen as a threat to the co-operative«.[167]

A legal discrimination against the members of collective farms existed only in the Soviet Union: internal passports had been denied to them since the 1932 famine, and Stalin's 1936 constitution had explicitly excluded them from state social security. Both forms of discrimination ended during the 1960s and 1970s.

Besides the improvement of remuneration, the members of collective farms were now, step by step, included in the state social security system. In this respect, the Soviet Union was significantly behind Eastern Europe. It took until 1964 for Khrushchev to finally introduce old-age pensions for the members. In general, old-age pensions were lower for them at the beginning, and in the Soviet case, they were significantly lower than those for industrial workers. Often, a minimum membership period in the collective farm was required.

Some East European countries, such as the GDR, included the members of collective farms from the beginning in the state social security (including health); however, until 1959, they had lower social benefits. Czechoslovakia included the members in 1953 in the state health insurance and in 1962 in other forms of social security. Hungary started to provide social security to the members of collective farms by introducing old-age pensions (for those joining up until 1960); later on, the others were included as well. Social security for health and motherhood was introduced only in 1966. The benefits were improved in 1968 and reached 1977 the same level as for industrial workers.[168] In Yugoslavia, old-age pensions were introduced in 1954 (unified with pensions paid to other workers in 1961), in Bulgaria in 1957, and in Poland in 1962. In Romania, it took until 1966, and in Albania, even until 1972. In Bulgaria, the distribution according to land brought in worked as an old-age payment until 1959.[169]

163 Wädekin, *Sozialistische Agrarpolitik in Osteuropa I*, 80, 114–32.
164 Ibid., 109.
165 Wädekin, *Sozialistische Agrarpolitik in Osteuropa II,* 183–84.
166 Swain, *Collective Farms,* 83–85.
167 Ibid., 85.
168 Ibid., 39–40.
169 Wädekin, *Sozialistische Agrarpolitik in Osteuropa II*, 193–94.

Modernization required skilled labor: How mechanization changed the demand for labor

The real start of mechanization and modernization in the 1960s strongly changed the demand for labor. A lot of new occupational categories were developed, and the need for skilled labor quickly increased. Stalin's combination of collectivization with the »class war«, followed by Khrushchev's fight against private small-scale production in agriculture, not only in the Soviet Union, but in all collectivizing Eastern European countries, pushed those more flexible and better qualified for farming out of the countryside. Unlike Western countries,[170] the available workforce on the collective farms could not satisfy the need for suitable, qualified labor. As primarily unskilled labor remained in the countryside, skilled labor had to be brought in from outside.[171]

The surplus of unskilled labor in the collective farms had negative consequences for modernization. As cheap unskilled labor was in excess supply (apart from the GDR and the Czech part of Czechoslovakia), the farms felt less economic need to substitute labor with capital. While in the West the increase of labor costs pushed complex mechanization ahead, such pressure was missing in all socialist countries. This slowed down complex mechanization; cheap, unskilled labor could be used for loading and other manual work. In the collective farms, a process of de-peasantization started. Previous farmers were transformed into agricultural laborers and lost control over the agricultural production process.

Practically all socialist countries had to provide skilled labor from outside. This caused significant and nearly insurmountable problems, where, as in the Soviet Union, a developed infrastructure was lacking, and living in remote rural areas was not an attractive option. Skilled laborers can find a job almost anywhere. Among those trained for jobs in agriculture, the turnover rate was extremely high; for example, in the Soviet Union, trained tractor drivers in the 1960s and 1970s typically left their jobs after only 11 to 13 months.[172] The situation was less dramatic, although difficult, in countries like the GDR, which had a well-developed rural infrastructure. A detailed study on this problem is only available for Hungary. I will therefore use the Hungarian case to illustrate what happened.[173] All other socialist countries faced similar challenges when initiating agricultural modernization.

170 In Western countries with private family farms, skilled labor was recruited from the farms. Among the younger family members were more flexible persons, capable and willing to receive the necessary skills to modernize and develop the private farms.

171 Swain, *Collective Farms,* 83–113, described this process for Hungary.

172 Merl, Why the Soviet Union, Vol. 5. Merl, Why the Soviet Union, Vol. 6.

173 Swain, *Collective Farms.*

The workforce of a collective farm may be split into »mobile« members, able to use their skills everywhere, and »immobile« members, unskilled and only usable for manual labor on the farm. Among the mobile laborers, there was a high turnover rate on the job. In Hungary, among those working with machinery and chemicals, as well as those in administration, including lower and upper management, a high share had been on the job for only up to 3 years. The large number of »immobile« members of limited use for the farms in Hungary was allowed to work on their plots, becoming the domain of pensioners, especially female pensioners, as well.[174]

Nowhere were skilled laborers willing to work for labor units with no or uncertain value. Already in the 1930s, the Soviet collective farms had to hire the limited number of skilled workers they needed from outside and to pay them wages.[175] When the collective farms, after the liquidation of the MTS, had to employ skilled labor themselves, they had to pay them wages in cash. The number of hired workers increased strongly with the progress of mechanization. Thus, in Hungary, the collective farms had to hire 10,000 skilled laborers in 1961, and this number had grown to 200,000 in 1967. About 40% of them were permanently employed.[176]

Recruiting the manager staff for the enlarged collective farms

Under Stalin, the presidents (or chairmen) of collective farms were usually political cadres or workers sent from outside by the Party. They hardly held any knowledge of agriculture. After Stalin's death, the selection changed strongly. The percentage of collective farm chairmen and state farm directors with qualified special education training increased significantly. Starting in 1957, the directors in Hungary were elected and selected by the members. Local peasants, who had previously developed their farms successfully, were often elected to management positions. Towards the end of the 1960s, with the enlargement of collective farms and the shift to industrialized agriculture, the situation changed. The jobs in the upper management required solid training, increasingly at higher education institutions. Training »on the job« could no longer provide the necessary qualifications and knowledge. The generation of capable middle peasants was now replaced by young, highly qualified, technically and politically educated managers: »a new stratum of technical experts« became presidents.[177]

174 Ibid., 93–104.
175 Merl, *Bauern*, 383.
176 Swain, *Collective Farms*, 37–50, 85–88.
177 Ibid., 116, see also 114–29. Swain also analyzed (149–59) the extent to which farm management was constrained from »below«. The general meeting was more of a theatrical event to achieve and

Even in Hungary, the Party maintained considerable control over the selection of presidents; this control was most efficiently exercised through their appointment. With the change of the collective farm statute in 1967, the presidents won control over the day-to-day economic activity on their farms. They decided on the methods of plan fulfillment, and they were free in decisions concerning the factor labor (including its manipulation).[178] However, despite the intentions of the New Economic Mechanism, managerial autonomy remained restricted in certain fields; the government maintained strict control over investment funds and capital flows.[179]

When the farms became autonomous cooperatives in 1968, many presidents already held a university or technical college degree. In 1960, only 4% of managers had a high school diploma; by 1974, this had increased to 43%.[180] Upward social mobility from the rank-and-file members to managers within the collective farms was, after 1968, practically excluded. In 1974, a »triple requirement« for management positions was introduced: political suitability, academic and political qualification, and management ability. The Party thus established a separate management with special requirements regarding their political and educational qualifications, which simple members did not fulfill. Until the end of the 1970s, »Cooperative farm management« became a separate body of carefully chosen professional individuals, able to organize the efficient running of large-scale farms.[181] Also in Hungary, farm management was very much a man's world; only 8% of the presidents were women.[182]

Among the specialized managers (apart from the financial managers), the younger persons were often better qualified than the older ones. The best-qualified young managers were very mobile, and their turnover rate was high. In the upper and the middle management, 46% of the presidents, 65% of the chief agronomists, 50% of the finance managers, and even 81% of the middle managers had been in their jobs for less than five years.[183]

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celebrate consensus. Important financial decisions were made without discussion in board meetings. Only in workplace meetings did the management have to convince the members because they held a veto right.

178 Ibid., 182. Cf. also 17–20. He describes the strategies with manipulating the use of labor.

179 Ibid., 11–13, 133–61.

180 Ibid., 116–22. In 1968, 52.5% of the presidents had been without special education.

181 Ibid., 117, 128–29. The control worked through informal networks. Only the Party could give the needed »certificate of trustworthiness«, a third of the presidents held Party positions.

182 Ibid., 119–22.

183 Ibid., 124–26.

Ending Stalin's ban on non-agricultural activities of the collective farms

Under Stalin, the collective farms were not allowed to engage in non-agricultural activities; otherwise, they would have stopped agricultural production, resulting in losses due to the low producer prices the state paid. This ban was incorporated into the collective farm statutes of all Eastern European countries under Stalin, and Khrushchev adhered to this ban.[184] As many small-scale farmers had incomes from non-agricultural activities before collectivization, this made the problem of providing work and income to their members for the collective farms even more significant.[185]

The ban was only lifted during the 1960s after collectivization was finished. Until 1966, in Hungary, despite the underemployment of its members, only 1% of the collective farms' labor force engaged in non-agricultural work.[186] After the lifting of the ban in 1967, this changed significantly. In Hungary, as in most other countries, agricultural producer prices were kept low, while non-agricultural work was better paid. The allowance, therefore, showed an unexpected effect. The cooperative farms started a competition with industrial enterprises for skilled industrial labor.[187] Instead of employing their underemployed members, who lacked skills, many farms hired specially qualified workers from outside and pursued highly profitable non-agricultural activities. Between 1968 and 1970, processing increased by 113%, construction work by 165%, other industrial activities by 110%, and direct marketing to consumers by 47%. No longer under strict state regulation, the cooperative farms could offer qualified workers higher wages than the industry. The farms came under attack from the »industrial lobby«, blaming them of »private enrichment«. Several presidents of cooperative farms were criminalized, and in the 1970s, some show trials were organized against them.[188] The Hungarian government reacted and forbade »labor poaching« from industrial enterprises. The lending of workers to industrial plants was also banned.[189]

The production and marketing of non-agricultural products significantly raised the incomes of the Hungarian cooperative farms. In 1973, the cooperative farms earned 21% of their revenue from non-agricultural and an additional 9.8%

184 Cf. my first article in this publication. According to Wädekin, the statute of 1935 only spoke of the task to develop handicraft and the cottage industry. In 1952, the statute banned non-agricultural side activities for collective farms. In the GDR, the 1959 statute allowed farms to process and perform construction activities – Wädekin, *Sozialistische Agrarpolitik in Osteuropa II*, 124.

185 Ibid., 265–75.

186 Ibid., 238. Swain, *Collective Farms,* 141.

187 Swain, *Collective Farms.* Varga, *The Hungarian Agricultural Miracle?.*

188 Varga, *The Hungarian Agricultural Miracle?*, 232–41, 282–83.

189 Swain, *Collective Farms*, 140–46.

from industrial activities. In 1980, they still accounted for 4.4% of total industrial production, 6.5% of construction, and 9% of food processing. Taking up non-agricultural activities reduced out-migration of the workforce in all countries and allowed collective farms to provide their members with more steady work and payment.[190] Following Khrushchev's replacement, the ban on non-agricultural activities of collective farms in the Soviet Union was also lifted. Now, support for non-agricultural activities in the countryside has begun, with a focus on sectors such as construction.

Delivery of machinery and equipment and significant state investments: The shift from »collectivization on the cheap« to »mechanization on the cheap«

Despite the dominance of large-scale enterprises and the propaganda and official statements, mechanization in all socialist countries lagged firmly behind that in the West in the 1960s, even compared to family farms.[191] Apart from the GDR, in all countries, the capital stock per worker in agriculture was lower than that in industry and construction.[192]

To reduce the gap to the West, high state investment and the increased supply of mechanized traction power, machinery, and modern equipment were inevitable. The supply of machinery and equipment in quantity increased strongly, but in most countries, the improvement in quality stayed behind that of the West. The Soviet Party and Gosplan, the head of State Planning, attempted to economize on the high costs associated with building new production lines and constructing specialized, high-quality equipment for these enterprises. Instead, they ordered other industrial branches to produce agricultural equipment as a secondary product. As a result, the primary impact was on livestock production, including the supply of fodder.[193] The need for internal transport, which is extremely important for large-scale agricultural enterprises, was often overlooked.[194] This contributed to the waste of scarce resources, as producing and supplying equipment below the Western standard also had to be financed. However, it did not necessarily raise the efficiency and yields to cope with the West. While with the replacement of Khrushchev, »collectivization on the cheap« came to an end, most socialist states, following the example of the Soviet Union, replaced it by »mechanization on the cheap«. Only Hungary chose a different approach and imported highly efficient

190 Wädekin, *Sozialistische Agrarpolitik in Osteuropa II,* 281. Swain, *Collective Farms,* 140–46.
191 Wädekin, *Sozialistische Agrarpolitik in Osteuropa II*, 12–17.
192 Ibid., 161. Merl, Why the Soviet Union, Vol. 6.
193 Ibid. Cf. also Wädekin, *Sozialistische Agrarpolitik in Osteuropa II*, 166–67.
194 Merl, Why the Soviet Union, Vol. 5. Merl, Why the Soviet Union, Vol. 6.

Western machinery systems, resulting in impressive increases in yields, especially of corn and grain.

Until the beginning of the 1960s, capital input into agriculture in all socialist countries had been below the share agriculture held in the total net product. The transfer of capital to industry continued in the 1950s, albeit in significantly smaller amounts than under Stalin. Only after the completion of collectivization and the replacement of Khrushchev did the capital flow reverse, and investments in agriculture increased to stabilize the collective farms and initiate modernization.[195] In all countries, agriculture shifted from being a supplier of capital to industry to becoming a net receiver. The increase in investment in agriculture was strongest in Czechoslovakia and Hungary. Until 1973, the GDR maintained a high level of investment in agriculture. Hungary reached the peak of investment between 1969 and 1971. In the Soviet Union, significant net investment in agriculture started only under Leonid Brezhnev. After 1970, Poland, Czechoslovakia, and the Soviet Union increased their agricultural investments further.[196] In most countries, significant investment at the beginning of the 1970s went into melioration, equipment for factory farming, greenhouses, mix fodder plants, storage, and similar.

The investment was partially wasted, as it was not primarily used to increase production efficiency, but rather to make permanent changes to the size of the production units, replacing only no longer needed previous constructions. With collectivization, most of the capital stock of private farms, no longer of use, was replaced. The enlargement of the collective farms necessitated new investments for replacement at the new sizes. When, at the turn of the 1970s, countries began to implement their models of industrialized agriculture, a large portion of the investment went into constructing new production facilities. Despite the significant increase in investment, production did not increase accordingly.[197]

195 Wädekin, *Sozialistische Agrarpolitik in Osteuropa II,* 131–32.

196 Ibid., 122–23.

197 Ibid., 126–30, 135–36. The change in the size of the production units had little effect on increasing yields and efficiency. A rush into craze for the vast and spectacular started. Limits were less set by the lack of finances, but by the insufficient capacity of the state–owned industry. The low quality of the machinery caused problems, and the lack of spare parts. In all countries, construction materials were in short supply.

6. THE TURN TO MODERNIZATION IN THE 1970S: COOPERATION, INTEGRATION, AND »INDUSTRIALIZED AGRICULTURE«. DIFFERENT CONCEPTS WITH SPECIAL REGARD TO THE GDR AND HUNGARY

In the 1970s, all socialist countries began the modernization of their agriculture, transitioning towards agro-industrial cooperation and integration. This involved the formation of horizontal intercompany cooperation and the more challenging vertical integration of agricultural enterprises with upstream and downstream industrial branches. The GDR and the Czech part of Czechoslovakia were the forerunners in this process. Bulgaria, which produces a significant amount of perishable foods such as fruits and vegetables, as well as products that require processing, including tobacco and wine, is placed in the middle group, alongside Hungary. At the same time, the Soviet Union and Romania stayed firmly behind. This occurred despite the fact that the Soviet Union was the leader in developing concepts for industrialized agriculture in the late 1920s. The construction of the first agro-industrial complexes started in 1930–1931. However, it was never finished, as Stalin did not provide the necessary financial support and even separated processing from agriculture to make it a state monopoly with high profits for the state budget.[198] The step to proceed to vertical integration was connected (apart from Poland and the Soviet Union) with the establishment of ministries responsible not only for agriculture, but also for input-producing, procurement, and processing industries. The Soviet Union did not follow until 1985, when it established Gosagroprom.[199]

The optimal size of the large-scale farms strongly depended on the infrastructure. Only the GDR, Czechoslovakia, and parts of Poland and Hungary had developed infrastructure in all respects: economic, social, and communicative (including transportation). A developed infrastructure was missing in most parts of the Soviet Union. The economic advantage of large-scale production units reached its limits at specific sizes, especially as in-farm transport costs increased significantly with size. While in the West, the focus was more oriented toward the market and its stabilization, the socialist countries were primarily focused on increasing production capacities. The impulses for the enlargement, apart from Hungary, came from above, not from the farms.[200] Another problem arose from the need to harmonize the property forms with the start of industrialized

198 Merl, *Die Anfänge*, 365–69. For the concepts of industrialized agriculture of Chayanov's group cf. Merl, Was Chayanov's concept.
199 Wädekin, *Sozialistische Agrarpolitik in Osteuropa II*, 265–98. Merl, Why the Soviet Union, Vol. 6.
200 Wädekin, *Sozialistische Agrarpolitik in Osteuropa II*, 290–93.

agriculture. Since 1971, the GDR formed large production units, in which the previous state and collective farms worked together, trying to unify the systems of wages and premiums. Hungary maintained the autonomy of state and collective farms until the mid-1970s, and Romania throughout the entire period. Czechoslovakia worked primarily with integration contracts.[201] The Soviet Union fell behind in the harmonization, as Khrushchev had instead favored the conversion of collective farms into state farms.

Especially with the upstream vertical integration of agriculture to agricultural machinery production, chemical industry, and other branches providing inputs, the Eastern European countries and the Soviet Union lagged strongly behind the West (and American agro-business). This hit primarily livestock farming. In 1975, the share of livestock holdings working in an industrial character in Bulgaria was 20% for slaughter pigs and 50% for slaughter poultry, as well as 25% for eggs. Czechoslovakia had reached 83% for milk cows, 48% for cattle, and 38% for pig fattening. Ninety-four percent of the laying hens were kept in industrialized production holdings. In the Soviet Union, as of 1975, there were only 668 large-scale fattening units, which produced 2.5% of the beef and 4% of the pork. Additionally, some collective and state farms owned large numbers of cattle and pigs. In poultry farming, the GDR held a leading role, producing 54% of the poultry in industrialized farms.[202]

In the following, I will describe the steps taken to transition to industrial methods of production in the GDR, adopting the most radical concept,[203] and in Hungary, utilizing Western technology with temporary impressive success.

GDR: Industrialized agriculture with separating plant and animal production

Ulbricht spoke of the intention to adopt industrial methods of production in 1963. Agriculture should be connected with industrial branches. In this process, the living conditions in the countryside should be harmonized with those in urban areas.[204] It took time to develop a concept. The transition to a new agricultural structure began with reorganizing the administration and consolidating the collective farms. Integrated large-scale enterprises were formed, starting with the establishment of cooperation between the enterprises.

201 Ibid., 282–89.
202 Ibid., 278–80.
203 Cf. especially DDR–Handbuch, 9–31, 783–812; Agrarfachtagung, 107–21; Hohmann, Akzentverschiebung.
204 Bauerkämper, *Ländliche Gesellschaft,* 194–205.

The reform of the administration started in 1963. Following Khrushchev's hectic administration reorganizations with replacing ministries by »councils«, the GDR also replaced its Ministry of agriculture and forestry with an »Agricultural council« with the task of running agricultural production. This council worked together with the committee for agricultural procurement and the agricultural bank. In 1968, councils for agricultural production and the food industry (RLN) were established to link agricultural production with processing. These councils combined agricultural councils with the first level of processing and committees for agricultural procurement. They became responsible for the complex administration of producing, procuring, and processing agricultural products. As the administrative turn to »councils« did not solve any problems, the GDR replaced the council in 1971 with a new Ministry of agriculture, forest, and food industry.

After abolishing compulsory deliveries in 1963, the GDR based the delivery of agricultural products to the food industry on contracts. In 1964, the number of plan criteria for farms was reduced. Only figures for market production, investment, and fertilizer supply were provided further. On this basis, the collective farms should propose their delivery plans. When the plan had been accepted, the collective farms should conclude contracts with the food industry. To account for the specifics of the agricultural production cycle, yearly plans were replaced with a biannual planning period based on the previous year's production. In 1964, the system of double prices (low for compulsory and higher for free deliveries) was abolished for plant production and poultry, and in 1968, also for animal production.

The GDR replaced its administrative planning during the 1960s with more economic regulations, while maintaining state control. For some products, compulsory deliveries were maintained, and the state continued to exert control over prices. As the prices did not provide incentives to increase production, the regime returned in 1971 to prescribe figures for sugar, milk, slaughter animals, and eggs.[205]

In principle, the prices should cover the cost of production and allow for a certain amount of profit (approximately 40%) to finance future investments.[206] With this intention, the GDR raised the agricultural production prices. In 1955, their level was 20% above the agricultural producer prices in West Germany; by 1971, it had risen to 80%, although inflation in the GDR was lower. This reflected a significant increase in costs. Input prices for equipment and agricultural machinery rose in 1966. In practice, the concept of farms financing the necessary

205 Wädekin, *Sozialistische Agrarpolitik in Osteuropa II*, 231–34.

206 The agricultural producer prices in theory should cover the »average costs of production«, including wages, and in addition provide about 40% »profit« from which accumulation for investments should be done. Cf. ibid., 194–222.

investments themselves was not satisfactory. Several collective farms still needed state subsidies to pay the guaranteed minimum income to their members.

The implementation of the new structure of the agrarian enterprises started in 1967/1968. The concentration, specialization, and scientification of the production became its declared goal. Concentration should be based on horizontal as well as vertical cooperation. Cooperative associations (KOG) were formed between the enterprises for special production branches, especially for animal production. From the horizontal cooperation, they expected economies of scale and the delivery of large amounts of standardized products to the processing industry and trade. In addition, cooperative unions (KOV) were formed. They should superimpose the KOG in the form of vertical connections with the processing industry. Based on long-term contracts, they were expected to deliver standardized products according to the assortment, determined by the processing industry, considering, different from the previous inflexible compulsory deliveries, the wishes and needs of industry and the consumers. In addition, central planning should be superimposed or replaced by a network of cooperative connections through contracts.

Horizontal cooperation connected different forms of enterprises. Pressure to change the structure of production was exercised by the decision to deliver machinery systems only in complexes of 4 to 10 units. This required enlarging the production units accordingly. Cooperative associations were formed for melioration, construction, and cattle stables, established by the joint investment of the participating enterprises. Until the end of the 1960s, cooperation existed in all branches of production. Juridically, the enterprises kept their independence, but they organized and planned the use of their technique jointly. The councils served as institutions of coordination and control.

Under the influence of the Central Committee Secretary for agriculture, Grüneberg, the 8th SED-Party congress in June 1971 made the concept of large-scale industrial production in agriculture obligatory. The idea of forming large-scale collective farms was rejected; cooperation was deemed the better approach. Animal and plant production should be divided into specialized enterprises. This meant a third change of agricultural production units in only one decade, always connected with the necessity to adapt the cattle barns and other constructions to the new size.

Grüneberg justified the concept with an alleged law of development. According to this law, large-scale production had to replace small-scale production in agriculture as well. This required the concentration of land and the means of production, as well as the specialization of enterprises.

This way, agriculture should profit from economies of scale by serial or mass production. He proclaimed four targets: the separation of animal and plant

production in the agricultural enterprises, the reduction of the per-unit costs by producing in large quantities, the increase of profitability, and labor productivity. In 1974, new norms for the size of specialized units were published: barns for 1,930 milk cows and fattening of 24,000 pigs. In plant production, one main fruit/product should be produced on 5,000–6,000 ha. For suitable vegetables and fruits, the industrial production should also start. Special services, such as fertilizing, plant protection, and transport, should be provided for several production units by specialized brigades or enterprises.

Grüneberg expected a constant increase in production and the harmonization of the living conditions between urban areas and the countryside. Since 1975, he pushed ahead (together with Günter Mittag, the vice head of the Council of Ministers and then Central Committee Secretary for economy) the separation of collective farms to plant or animal production. The delivery of affordable means of production, such as fertilizers and machinery, should increase yields and productivity while reducing production costs. In reality, the opposite effect was achieved: the cost of production steadily increased as prices for agricultural inputs rose sharply during the 1970s, creating a cost trap.

With the transition to the concept of industrial production, the cooperative associations (KOG) were replaced by independent production associations (KOE) for specific types of production. They got their own juristic status and own capital. The enterprises involved, both collective and state farms, formed a council. Since 1972/73, cooperative associations of plant production (KAP) were formed as independent, all-inclusive complexes of agricultural production, in which enterprises of different property forms collaborated and jointly cultivated farm and grassland. In early 1974, already 1,173 KAP with 4,000 ha on average existed, at the same time, the merger to »fully corporated« villages was pushed ahead.[207] The concentration reached its peak in 1977/78. However, with the size of the farms, the costs of transportation increased, and the use of heavy machinery reduced soil fertility. Finally, 1,210 KAP or ZBE plant productions were organized. The formation of inter-company institutions (ZBE) for animal production turned out to be much more complicated. It was slowed down by the considerable investment needed to construct new stables in the necessary sizes. In the mid-1970s, there were only 367 ZBE animal production facilities.

The previous collective and state farms remained as »trunk-collective/state farms«, responsible only for those branches that could not be done in separate production unions. The number of collective farms reduced from about 9,000 at the beginning to 4,574 trunk LPG in 1975, mostly engaged in animal production, and to 2,899 in 1980.

207 Cf. also Bauerkämper, *Ländliche Gesellschaft,* 199–202; Steiner, *Von Plan,* 185–87.

As the combination of different forms of property, even in the GDR, caused numerous problems, further reorganization began in 1977. The ZBE and the KAP were reorganized into collective farms for plant or animal production. Only a few KAP remained. The formation of KOE animal production was combined with further concentration.

Hungary: making use of highly efficient Western production systems and competition

Although Hungary was temporarily successful in its transition to industrial production in agriculture, it eventually reached the economic and moral limits of this approach.[208] In the end, Hungary also fell into the cost trap, due to the extreme increase in the costs of industrial-produced inputs, while agricultural producer prices were kept low. The political limitations against market-based freedoms never ended.[209]

With their enlargement, the number of collective farms reduced to 2,894 by 1970. The average sowing area increased from 700 ha to 1,700 ha.[210] On this basis, between 1968 and 1975, the replacement of their technical base occurred, utilizing modern production systems imported from the West. With further pressure to expand the enterprises, the number of collective farms declined to 1,800 in 1975 and to 1,400 in 1985, reaching an average size of 3,000 hectares.

Between 1960 and 1963, Hungary transferred Western agricultural technology to the state farm of Babolna, with state financial support, to establish industrial poultry production. This farm was established in Hungary in 1963, laying the foundation for industrialized poultry meat and egg production. In the next step, the farm disseminated Western production technology in Hungary, providing support to partner farms. They produced commodities following the guidelines of the system owner in Hungary, the Babolna state farm. In 1964, the farm already had 63, and in 1967, as many as 217 partner farms.[211]

After the Hungarian farms were freed from state control in 1967 and became cooperatives, they began to adopt Western closed production systems. With the focus first on corn production, this became a mass phenomenon. In general, state farms served as partners to Western companies and as »mediators of transfers«.

208 Varga, *The Hungarian Agricultural Miracle?*, 221–76. Varga shows the limits of this agrarian miracle. She stresses that, in addition to the moral condemnation of private »greed of profit«, the agricultural policy determined economic distress – ibid., 245–52.

209 Wädekin, *Sozialistische Agrarpolitik in Osteuropa II,* 221–34.

210 Merl, Hat sich der landwirtschaftliche Großbetrieb, 139–70. Varga, Neue Produktionsbeziehungen, 198–214.

211 Varga, *The Hungarian Agricultural Miracle?*, 162–67.

The cooperatives were free to choose the production systems they wanted to join or to decide not to participate in this process. Hungary succeeded in integrating »the highly developed industrial-style production models of capitalist agriculture,« working in competition with each other, in Hungarian agriculture.[212] Although adopting this »Americanization« with highly efficient Western technology, the operational structure of the Hungarian farms was hardly touched.

At the beginning of the 1970s, the government promoted the transition to organized agricultural production systems with the aid of state subsidies. These systems have been used in plant production since 1971, primarily for corn and wheat. They were later adopted for animal husbandry, beginning with industrial poultry production. In 1981, there were 21 different systems in grain production working on 2.5 million ha, approximately 60% of the land. In total, more than 70 systems were active across approximately 80 production branches.

The production systems contributed to modernizing Hungary's agricultural technology, keeping it close to the world standard. They disseminated progressive methods of production by distributing hybrids, seeds, and fertilizers. They supplied high-quality (Western) machinery, including repair services and spare parts, to ensure that the machines run even during the peak of work. The production systems provided additional services, including consultation on production methods, technology, and scientific examinations to determine the best type of plant and fertilizer supply for the soil. They bought the means of production for their member farms. Some systems offered the entire production process (including seed and machinery), while others handled only the processing and marketing of the final product.[213] Other Eastern European countries imported only models of machinery and equipment from the West to construct their own improved equipment. However, in general, they did not provide full service and did not allow competition between suppliers to improve the service.[214]

Most cooperative farms joined several production systems (on average 3 to 4) for different branches of their production. In comparison to farms not joining the system, they achieved yields up to 15% higher and had lower self-costs. The achievements with corn production by using hybrids were most impressive. The yields doubled and reached the Western standard. Corn was produced over several hundred hectares over two months, with only two people. Wheat yields also doubled. If a production system was not working profitably for them, the cooperative could exit.

212 Ibid., 183–220, 281–82.
213 Varga, Neue Produktionsbeziehungen.
214 Merl, Why the Soviet Union, Vol. 5. Merl, Why the Soviet Union, Vol. 6.

Financing the investment remained problematic. Only some enterprises achieved impressive results. While some farms reached yields as high as 6,000 liters of milk per cow, others stayed significantly below that. While corn production was mechanized to 87%, potato production was only mechanized to about 50%. Irrigation was not used sufficiently, and the average use of fertilizers and chemicals fell behind that of Western Europe, as well as the GDR and Czechoslovakia.[215]

The Soviet Union: staying behind in the transfer to industrialized production

In 1971, the Soviet Party Program mentioned forming agro-industrial complexes (AIK), but apart from some emphasis on production, little was done. Livestock production, in particular, lagged in modernization on an industrial basis. In plant production, the sizes of the farms would have allowed for industrial production, but mechanization in general was poor, often even defective, and did not meet the needs.[216] Due to a lack of harvest machinery, it had to be used in different places on various farms and transported from west to east during harvest.[217]

Following the 1976 *Politburo* decision, reconstruction efforts began in three directions. Cooperative associations were formed between the enterprises, for example, for poultry and fruit production. The integration of previously independent enterprises or branches occurred through mergers. Until 1979, in combination with specialization in milk, cattle, or vegetable production, approximately 9,000 such integrated units were formed. Until 1979, about 800 AIKs were organized as the third form. These included, in general, the downstream processing industry and trade, and, in rare cases, the upstream industry that produced inputs. The number of AIKs increased to approximately 3,000 by 1983. The reorganization of AIK ended in 1985.

The 1982 food program took into account the entire complex of the agricultural sector for the first time: the upstream service industries, the downstream industries involved in processing and trade, and the improvement of infrastructure. In 1985, Gosagroprom was established as the central administrative body for the agricultural sector, encompassing its related industrial components. With the food program, management of agriculture returned from the branch to the territorial principle. Now, all enterprises within one Rayon should be united into AIK. To coordinate the planning of the enterprises, Rayon-Agro-industrial-unions

215 Varga, Neue Produktionsbeziehungen.
216 Wädekin, *Sozialistische Agrarpolitik in Osteuropa II*, 270.
217 Cf. Wädekin, *Sozialistische Agrarpolitik in Osteuropa II;* Merl, Why the Soviet Union, Vol. 6. Even in the GDR, some machinery had to be used in different places.

(RAPO) should be established. In 1985, 3,109 RAPO existed. While the AIK had been initially organized by branches, they returned to a territorial management structure in 1982, as losses due to a lack of coordination were substantial, and investments showed little efficiency. As the local costs often did not correspond to the prices dictated by the state, many AIK decided to work with prices different from the state prices.

7. WHY DID INDUSTRIALIZED AGRICULTURE LEAD ALL SOCIALIST COUNTRIES INTO A COST TRAP?

The assumption that transferring to »industrial forms of production« would reduce production costs due to the effects of the economies of scale did not work in any socialist country. Often, scarce resources were wasted. Much of the investment was used solely to adapt production to the continually increasing sizes of the production units, rather than to enhance production efficiency. In the GDR, the increase in size contributed significantly to an enormous rise in the per-unit production costs.

In the following, I will examine some reasons for the cost trap, beginning with the adverse effects of work alienation. Then, I will touch on the ever-increasing prices for agricultural inputs, the increase of capital input without a corresponding reduction in labor input, and the disregard of agricultural concentration specifics.

Alienation from work: Loss of the overview of the agricultural production process

Agricultural labor productivity in the GDR fell back in relation to West Germany. One reason for this was the alienation of work in connection with the enlargement of the farms. This resulted in a loss of societal control over work. While the hierarchy within smaller farms was often based on trust rather than pure administration, this changed with the transition to industrial production. In the GDR, the separation of plant and animal production contributed to a sense of alienation from work. Brigades, working in plant production, became responsible for fields of up to 15,000 ha. They were working several villages away and always in different places. Nobody took notice of the quality of their work. This led to poor work receiving the highest possible premiums, regardless of yields or other criteria. For the GDR, the problems were described in a monograph. Not seeing the results of the work contributed to the loss of interest in them. The narrow

specialization led to monotonous work, and a considerable amount of work time was lost transporting the workforce to and from distant fields. Unmarried young workers were housed in barracks. Working in industrialized agriculture meant losing all personal connections at work. The administration was felt as an anonymous bureaucracy, running the farm from their desks without knowing the practice. On the contrary, people working in trunk collective farms were quite satisfied with the varied types of work, allowing them to keep an overview of the production process.[218]

Agricultural sociologists in the GDR therefore proposed a change to the organization of work: The members of the collective farms should take direct and active part in the farm's decision-making, property and responsibility should be made concrete. At the end of the 1970s, the GDR launched a campaign to attract young people who had left the countryside due to dissatisfaction with working conditions. This showed effects. By the end of the 1980s, approximately 50% of new skilled laborers came from within the collective farms. Among those sent from outside, labor turnover remained extremely high.[219]

Increased prices for inputs in agriculture without providing more efficient machinery

Since the early 1970s, prices for agricultural inputs have increased significantly in all socialist countries. A general reason for the cost increase was the practice of agricultural machinery plants in the command economy. They often stopped the production of »old« but reasonably priced machinery. Instead, they only offered »new« machinery at significantly higher prices, in most cases with no higher efficiency, and in general, far below Western standards. Thus, unlike in Western agriculture, the price increase was not compensated by increased efficiency and higher yields. The situation was exacerbated by the lack of improvement in services, and the provision of spare parts was consistently inadequate. During the 1970s, the cost of producing animals and potatoes in the Soviet Union increased by 50% to 70%, while the cost of producing grain increased by 45%. Only the costs for producing poultry and eggs increased moderately (3–5%). In the GDR, plant production increased by 14% in the 1970s; however, the cost of plant production increased by 21%, animal production increased by 10%, and production costs increased by 13%.

218 Eckart, *So sehe ick.*

219 Interview with Kurt Krambach, agricultural sociologist at the GDR Academy of Science, in 1990. He stated that the people look on their collective farm as a state and not as »their« enterprise.

The statistics ignored these price increases and took the much more expensive new machines with 100 in the calculation, as if the price was the same as before[220]. Many countries started to provide relief, either by subsidizing agricultural input prices or by raising the producer prices paid by the state. The Soviet Union periodically annulled the old debts of the collective farms. Thus, instead of fighting against the reasons for the increase in input costs, the state provided additional subsidies in order not to lose its »control« over the prices.

Collective or state farms had little opportunity to select the most suitable machinery for their needs. The state provided and distributed investment, machinery, and equipment. Decisions on investment in irrigation and drainage were made by the ministry above. The farms could only refuse the investment. The Soviet Union spent substantial amounts of money to expand irrigation and drainage systems without any noticeable impact on yields.

After compulsory deliveries were liquidated (in Hungary and Romania at the beginning of 1957, in the Soviet Union in 1958, in Bulgaria in 1959, in Czechoslovakia in 1960, and the GDR in 1964), state producer prices became more important because farms could now react more strongly to prices that caused losses. Therefore, most countries returned to paying split producer prices in the mid-1960s to increase the incentive to deliver over-plan production, for which higher prices were paid. In the Soviet Union, this had a drastic effect. In years of good harvests, significantly higher prices were paid due to premiums for over-plan deliveries than in years with a poor harvest.

Despite increasing producer prices in 1983, 24 percent of collective farms and 42% of state farms in the Soviet Union were unable to accumulate capital because many procurement prices did not cover production costs. For example, they covered only 70–75% of production costs for potatoes, beef and pork, 80% of vegetables, and 90% of milk. In reaction to prices causing chronic losses, the collective farms reduced the production of these products.

Increase in the input of capital without reducing the labor input accordingly

In Western agriculture, capital input replaced labor, and production costs remained unchanged. In all Eastern European countries, however, the increased capital input hardly reduced labor input. Even when some people were set free, the amount of labor input often stayed relatively stable, as only the previous underemployment of the workforce was reduced. The costs for the increasing input of capital, thus, were not equalized by the reduction of the labor costs. The

220 Wädekin, *Sozialistische Agrarpolitik in Osteuropa II,* 212.

provided »complex« mechanization was insufficient. Often, some labor-intensive work had to be done by hand, especially storing and packing. Little mechanization was provided for labor-intensive work, such as harvesting potatoes, hay, and silage, as well as animal production in total, and the fight against weeds. In the Soviet Union, even labor input from other branches of the economy took place during the harvest. In September, students were sent to the countryside to assist with various tasks. In many Eastern European countries, non-agricultural people were sent to the countryside as helpers, even during the mostly mechanized grain harvest.[221]

The reduction in labor input was significantly lower in Poland, Yugoslavia, and the Soviet Union than in Western countries. Considering the large-scale size of the farms, the labor input was also high in Hungary, Czechoslovakia, and the GDR.[222] In the GDR, since 1976, hardly any laborers were set free from agriculture. Since 1980, the number of workers in the GDR agriculture has increased. While labor productivity still had reached about 62% of the level in West Germany between 1966 and 1970, it fell to only 53% between 1976 and 1980. Before 1974, the GDR's agriculture had coped quite well in comparison with agriculture in West Germany. Grüneberg's concept of industrialized agriculture caused a disaster. Despite high investments, the GDR agriculture stagnated between 1974 and 1982. During this period, the GDR lost its leading role among Eastern European countries in most branches, while Hungary improved its position.

While labor productivity in Western agriculture since the 1970s has been as high as, or even higher than, in industry, in socialist countries it has been significantly lower than that of industry. At the beginning of the 1970s, agricultural labor productivity in Poland and Romania was only 19–20% of that in industry. In the GDR, the rate was approximately 50%.[223]

Ignoring the specifics of concentration in agriculture, working with plants and animals

Understanding the deficiencies of the concept of »socialist agriculture« requires knowledge of Christian Krebs's study on the origin and development of the concept by Marx, Engels, and other socialists. They assumed that agriculture would be subjected to similar processes of concentration as industry. Krebs convincingly put Marx's expectation in question with the idea that the peasants' petty commodity production, with the simple exchange of goods by the producers, would necessarily produce capitalism. He explains why the parallelization

221 Ibid., 117.
222 Ibid., 106–09.
223 Ibid., 118–20.

of the development of the peasants' »simple« or »petty commodity production« with the industry did not work and similar economies of scale are not possible in agriculture.[224] Here, other forms of concentration are likely to raise efficiency, as the real »producers« in agriculture are plants and animals, and not the workforce. Intensification of production is also possible without increasing the size of the production as this has only limited effects. Copying the industrial organization does not increase yields in agriculture. Moreover, insufficient attention is paid to the fact that internal transport costs increase significantly with the size of the farms.

In reaction to the cost trap: Reducing the costs of production

Detailed data on costs and subsidies, published in the statistical yearbooks, are available for the GDR.[225] I will therefore use this data to describe the reaction, which, however, was similar in most other socialist countries.

The reorganized »industrial agriculture«, set up in the GDR in the mid-1970s, became a cost trap. In reaction to this, the planned norms for cattle barns were reduced, and reorganization slowed down. The SED decided to stop further concentration. After the death of Grüneberg in 1981, it was decided to return the employed to the territorial principle. In the 1980s, the goal of harmonizing living conditions in rural and urban areas was abandoned. As the prices for agricultural inputs were fixed in 1973, the need for state subsidies increased significantly: from 0.4 billion D-mark in 1974 to 6.9 billion D-mark in 1982.

The costs of maintaining agricultural production and avoiding public unrest over the increase in food prices required enormous state subsidies. The GDR, for example, subsidized food prices for consumers to keep them low and stable, anxious that rising food prices would cause dangerous public unrest, as seen in the Soviet Union in 1962 and several times in Poland. Although it was hardly possible to finance the subsidies any longer, the SED leadership did not dare initiate the necessary correction of consumer prices to reflect the increased costs of production until the end of the regime in 1989. However, other measures were taken to reduce the pressure of costs. Thus, the spending of scarce currency on imports for agriculture, such as concentrated feed and fuel, was reduced and brought under strict state control. The technical drying of straw and root crops was discontinued in 1978 to conserve fuel imports.

In the GDR, subsidies from the state budget for agriculture increased significantly between 1970 and 1980: subsidies for maintaining low and stable consumer prices rose from 4.85 to 7.85 billion D-mark, and subsidies for reducing

224 Krebs, *Die weltanschaulichen und wirtschaftstheoretischen Grundlagen.*
225 Cf. Weber, *Stand*.

the prices of agricultural means of production rose from zero to 6.11 billion D-mark. The number of permanently employed persons (agriculture and ACZ with no forest, veterinary services, and plant protection) between 1970 and 1980 fell from 907,962 to 820,122 persons, while salaries and premiums paid rose by 125%, from 7.45 to 9.40 billion D-mark. While the GDR's net production of agriculture and forest increased only by 11% (from 14.95 to 16.62 billion D-mark), the capital stock increased from 37.5 to 61.7 billion D-mark.[226]

To reduce the use of fuel and concentrated feed, the agricultural price reform of 1984 aimed to encourage enterprises to take the costs of means of production into strong account. The end of state subsidies for means of production significantly increased the production costs for the farms. This increase, however, was more than compensated by a substantial rise in the producer prices paid by the state. As a consequence, state subsidies to keep consumer prices low increased very strongly. In 1986, already 30.9 billion D-mark (7.85 billion in 1980) were paid, while subsidies for means of production fell to 3.1 billion D-mark (6.11 billion in 1980). In total, the GDR paid 34 billion D-mark in subsidies in 1986 to agriculture (more than double the sum of 1980 (14 billion D-mark). Regarding the net income of the population, this meant that the GDR paid as much as 2,000 D-mark of subsidies per capita for the people's food consumption, while the average yearly income was 9,000 D-mark. After the 1984 price reform, hardly any agricultural enterprise in the GDR operated at a loss, whereas previously, a significant part had not generated sufficient income to cover investment and salaries from its »profit«.

As in several other Eastern European countries, the goals of the 1982 food program in the Soviet Union also aimed to substitute imports to save currency. It therefore tried to increase the incentives for using local resources through a price policy. Subsidies for the means of production were cut. To reduce the high losses of production, investment should be concentrated in downstream branches, such as transportation, storage, and trade, which were previously neglected. To attract and retain well-qualified, skilled specialists on the farms, their wages were adjusted to the level paid in industry, and comparable living, housing, and services were provided to them as in urban areas. To satisfy the demand for skilled labor, investment was increasingly directed toward the social sphere and infrastructure improvement. Agricultural specialists, working in the countryside, got priority access to a private car. People working in the countryside were allowed to build single houses and hold private plots.

226 Hohmann, Akzentverschiebung.

8. THE RETURN TO COST-EFFICIENT PRIVATE SMALL-SCALE AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTION

The crisis of the socialist large-scale agricultural enterprises put their superiority over small-scale production in question. Apart from Czechoslovakia, all other socialist states started to support the small-scale private output. Working with family labor allowed the state to save money as it did not have to provide the cost for wages and social security as for »socialist labor« in the large-scale farms.

Hungary began to react to the cost trap as early as 1976. It stopped its previous fixation on large-scale socialist enterprises by starting to promote private, small-scale production. This was the beginning of the successful integration of private small-scale production into the cooperatives. Large-scale farms focused on the highly mechanized branches of arable crop cultivation, while household plots specialized in labor-intensive vegetable and fruit production, as well as poultry and pig farming.[227] State promotion also included small-scale agricultural production by non-agricultural people.[228] The integration of small-scale agriculture into socialist agriculture in Hungary reached an unprecedented extent by the beginning of the 1980s. Now the state started »to harvest the capital reserves created by "family labor"«.[229]

At the beginning of the 1980s, the Hungarian government increased the integration of family labor into the service and industry sectors to reduce the production costs of large-scale enterprises by creating a mass of new, less closely regulated production units. Among them were »economic work partnerships«, which required that at least one member have a trade qualification. They got an allowance to lease space and machinery from the state enterprises and subcontract to them. A special form was the »enterprise economic work partnerships«, consisting of employees or pensioners of a parent enterprise. Most members provided the work in their spare time while working full-time in the socialist economy.[230]

Hungary also reduced the state subsidies to the farms. As a consequence, about one-third of the cooperative farms, which held 44% of the sown area, operated at a loss. Between 1982 and 1984, the state supported the liquidation of some of them and the formation of economic working groups or small specialist groups within these farms. They took over production orders by contract and worked on their account. The state did not interfere in this process and allowed the cooperatives to decide how best to react to the economic pressure of ending the state subsidies.

227 Varga, *The Hungarian Agricultural Miracle?*, 282.
228 Ibid., 253–54.
229 Swain, *Collective Farms*, 4.
230 Ibid., 10–11.

In Hungary, about 1.5 to 1.6 million families were busy in agriculture after work (in their primary job), which is about 40% of the total population. Non-agricultural workers and employees accounted for approximately 40% of private agricultural production.[231] Private production dominated in labor-intensive branches, difficult to mechanize, such as fruits, vegetables, wine, fattening of pigs and geese, in addition to the meat of small animals like rabbits and pigeons. It was strongly oriented to the market, and the collective and state farms provided attractive conditions to all private producers. They served as trade enterprises by providing necessary inputs and means of production, offering services such as plowing the land, and taking over the marketing of their products. In 1981, state and collective farms employed about 3,000 specialists only to advise their small-scale producers. Approximately 540,000 private producers participated in this integrated form of production. In Hungary, consumer prices remained at the same level for all consumers. Therefore, selling on free markets (as in the Soviet Union) lost its attraction for the private producers.

By focusing on mobilizing local resources for production to substitute for imports, the Soviet Union also changed its attitude toward private production. Since 1977, the restrictions on the plots have been lifted step by step, for example, for the fattening of animals, which is not profitable for large-scale enterprises. Since 1981, it has been allowed to use additional grassland for the harvesting of fodder, and in 1986, the upper limits for keeping animals were annulled.[232]

Since 1982, the Soviet Union has also tried to improve the motivation for good work with incentives. The formation of »contract teams« (*zveno*) was propagated: they should take over orders to produce certain products, organizing the work themselves. The farms should provide them with the necessary means of production. Payment should be for the final product, calculated, however, by the official norms. However, this attempt was not effective under Soviet conditions. Often, enterprises failed to fulfill their obligations, necessary inputs did not arrive on time, and the turnover of team members was significant. The income calculation was complicated as it had to be based on state norms instead of simply on the final product.

After abolishing the upper limits on the size of private plots in 1977, the GDR also began to support the private agricultural production of non-agricultural

231 About 22,000 small private farms were left, mainly working on poor soil. The private plots of the members of the collective farms measured on average 0.57 ha, and together with the private farms, 650,000 ha were cultivated privately. In addition, there were 790,000 small land allotments of non–agricultural workers and employees.

232 The plots, however, failed to provide the expected additional food, as machinery for work on the small plots was missing, and the prices paid by the state for buying up these products were not attractive. Unlike in Hungary, the collective farms did not provide attractive conditions for selling privately produced products.

individuals. It entered into a contract with the VKSK (the association of allotment gardeners, settlers, and small animal breeders), founded in 1959, which had approximately 1.5 million members by around 1980. The state paid its members 10% more for fruits, vegetables, and small animals than it paid collective farms. The products bought by the state trade were then sold in state shops at highly subsidized state prices, below the prices paid to private producers. The VKSK delivered about one-third of the fruits, 100% of rabbits for meat, 100% of honey, two-thirds of the geese, 25% of the vegetables, and 40% of sheep wool. The share of the VKSK in providing products for state marketing showed a strongly increasing trend. In the GDR, as in other socialist countries, primarily the Soviet Union, it was a widespread practice to buy highly subsidized bread to feed it to private animals, as concentrated feed was costly and in short supply.[233]

In many countries, family members changed their way of production on private plots. They reduced the time and labor-intensive keeping of cows, while the keeping of sheep and pigs increased. The younger generation wanted to spend less time on the plots.[234]

9. THE FATE OF SOCIALIST AGRICULTURE AFTER THE END OF THE SOCIALIST REGIMES: WHAT DOES THIS TELL US ABOUT ITS ADVANTAGES AND SHORTCOMINGS?

To assess the question of the extent to which socialist agriculture was a success or failure, it is helpful to examine what happened to it after the end of the socialist regimes. In 1985, Swain argued that the Hungarian collective farms were a »socialist success« regarding economics, while they were a »socialist failure« regarding social and political aspects, as they did not create a workplace environment with intrinsically socialist features.[235] In my understanding, this assessment had to be revised after the end of the socialist regimes. From today's perspective, socialist agriculture was an economic failure. It was unable to produce cost-efficiently and wasted material and human resources. At the same time, the working conditions and social security it provided did satisfy the workforce of the socialist farms in most countries, with the only exceptions of Romania and Albania.[236]

Despite the severe economic problems caused by the cost trap, in Hungary, Czechoslovakia, Bulgaria, the GDR, and the Soviet Union, most collective farm members were satisfied with their working conditions at the beginning of

233 Bauerkämper, *Ländliche Gesellschaft,* 202–05.
234 Swain, *Collective Farms*, 9–10.
235 Ibid., 9–11, 181. He based his assessment on »socialist principles«.
236 Swain, Agricultural Restitution. Also Merl, Agrarian transformations and Merl, Key Features.

the 1980s, which were now quite similar to those of industrial workers. Non-agricultural activities in the second economy were now allowed everywhere. The members received a fairly reasonable payment for the sometimes relatively low-quality work. Payment, in most cases, did not depend on the work results. In most countries, they enjoyed the same working conditions and social security as industrial laborers. Although the harmonization of living in the countryside with urban areas was not achieved, the balance of socialist industrial agriculture towards social goals was not too bad. Significant public investments in farms and private investments in housing had developed a general sense of well-being in the countryside. The previous infrastructural disadvantages related to culture and living had been reduced. On the collective farms, they now enjoyed regular working hours, vacation, and free weekends.[237]

After the end of the socialist regimes, all countries started a reconstruction, following two requirements: 1/ to correct by the restitution of their property the injustice done by collectivization to the proprietors of land and equipment, and 2/ to transfer the farms to – corporate or private – agricultural enterprises coping to produce in a market economy under competitive conditions. In this process, external and internal factors played a role. Political discrimination of former »socialist« enterprises and the need to increase efficiency by reducing production costs were external factors. To this end, the workforce had to be significantly reduced, and low-efficiency machinery and equipment had to be replaced with highly efficient Western models. The satisfaction of the collective farms' members with their living and working conditions, and the trust they hold in their management to cope with the challenges of transforming the enterprise, were internal factors. They determined the outcome of the meetings, in which the present members and the – by now mostly external – property holders had to vote on the economic concept that the management had developed for the future of the enterprise, and the opening balance, distributing the financial and material assets of the enterprise. Both needed the approval of the present members and (separately) of the property holders, two groups of very different interests.

The internal factors provide the clearest judgment on success or failure. Those »socialist« farms that had not provided a comfortable living, social security, and acceptable working conditions to their members disappeared immediately. This was a common occurrence with the collective farms in Romania and Albania. Both countries never ended Stalin's discrimination against the peasants; the incomes of the members stayed miserable, and distribution by labor-units was never abolished. In Albania, the members' vote led to the complete liquidation of the

237 Bauerkämper, *Ländliche Gesellschaft*. Bauerkämper, Collectivization, 34. Swain, Agricultural Restitution, 199–201.

collective farms, and in Romania, it led to a significant extent of liquidation.[238] In all other countries, in the overwhelming majority of cases, the members gave their consent to the management's proposals.[239] External factors worked more complexly. Each country approached the legislation on restitution, bankruptcy, and restructuring the large-scale farms differently. In Germany, the regulation of »old debts« played a decisive role in the outcome.[240]

To provide compensation for the historical injustices done by the expropriations, the assets (of the collective farms) had to be returned to the real owners. Only in Poland and Yugoslavia, there was no need for this as they had stopped collectivization.[241] Bulgaria and Romania insisted on returning the land within the historical boundaries, which caused special problems.

Most new governments (except Bulgaria) exercised intense political pressure to destroy the collective farms. They wanted to restore peasant agriculture as it had existed before collectivization. They did not take into account the economic changes that had occurred over the past few decades. The preconditions for successfully running a family farm in most industrialized countries were vastly different from those in the 1950s. A quick progress of agricultural science (for example, the »green revolution«) and knowledge had taken place. Even private farmers needed solid training and qualifications to cope with the new requirements of farming. Every farm used efficient machinery and equipment and had to invest in fertilizer and a high-quality stock of animals. To calculate the risks of investment, they utilized advice from cooperatives or private consultants. In addition, a process of concentration had taken place. The medium size of a farm had at least tripled. Many farmers had retired without finding a successor. They often kept their property but rented out their land to other farmers.

In general, the restituted property was small and often split. Such holdings no longer provided the preconditions for successful farming. In addition, most previous land proprietors, more precisely their heirs, had been away from agriculture for a long time, and many had never worked in agriculture. Only a very few of those who regained their land property were able or willing to restart private farming.[242] Only members of the previous collective farm who had a special

238 Swain, Agricultural Restitution, 1199–219. He gives an overview on the outcome in Romania, Czechia, Slovakia, and Hungary.

239 Ibid., 1199–201.

240 Merl, Agrarian transformations, 130–47. In the GDR, the costs for investments in the local infrastructure and social institutions were registered as debts of the farms, although they never had access to this money. The Kohl government required to repay these »old debts«. It took a decade to solve this problem finally and to free the enterprises from repayment.

241 Poland suffered from a lack of land consolidation, elsewhere reached by collectivization – Swain, Agricultural Restitution, 1201.

242 Many new private farms in the GDR were founded by people from West–Germany or even from abroad, often from the Netherlands. Many started a (family) farm with several hundred hectares.

»peasant mentality« and loved working with animals and in the fields, regardless of the length of the workday, could cope with such risks. Under these conditions, only very few of those getting their land back decided to start (individual) farming. Among those restarting voluntarily were many specialists and members of management, who held the necessary qualifications and network connections to acquire machinery. Rank-and-file members seldom decided to run this risk if they had other alternatives. Most preferred to lease their land out. The new leaseholders, often reorganized large-scale enterprises, had to manage a large number of lease contracts. They held little land; most now leased the land from hundreds of proprietors. In Hungary, they were not even allowed to buy land.[243]

On the other hand, large-scale enterprises, run by qualified managers and equipped with high-quality equipment, had a good chance of coping with market conditions. The fact that so many of them survived the re-registration process (primarily to »true« cooperatives, ltd., seldom to a holding) reveals where the decisive deficiencies of the socialist regimes had been. The problem had not primarily been the size of the enterprise, but rather that the directors, presidents, and chairmen had been under command from above and could not select their own inputs and machinery necessary for efficient production. Now, many of them coped well with deciding on their own risk. They prioritized cost-efficient production, selected highly efficient machinery and livestock, and reduced the workforce to those truly necessary, retaining primarily skilled workers.[244] The fact that most of these managers came from previously existing state or collective farms suggests that they were well-qualified for their jobs and able to earn the trust of their previous members.

In the Czech Republic, restitution was highly politicized. It should return the object lost at full value and in its actual form. However, restitution was not a mass phenomenon, as the land was kept in private ownership: it affected only those expropriated as *kulaks* at the beginning of the 1950s, and the estate owners, who were expropriated in 1948. Other land could be assigned to them.[245] Due to the creation of »cooperative property« in 1967, restitution in Hungary became a mass phenomenon. At the end of the 1980s, only 35% of the land had remained in private property. Thus, many had to be compensated for their loss. In Hungary, however, there was considerable concern about the viability of future structures. Therefore, it was decided not to return the land, but to issue restitution vouchers that allowed one to acquire land in auctions, not limited to the original location.

243 Swain, Agricultural Restitution, 1205–06.

244 The success of the large–scale farms or the newly founded large family farms depended primarily on raising the efficiency. In all previous socialist countries, the plant and animal yields reached before were soon surpassed.

245 Swain, Agricultural Restitution, 1201.

Everyone should get something, but nobody might claim »their« property back. Compensation could be provided by physical assets or financial securities, but not in cash.

In Czechoslovakia (as in Germany), the management of the large-scale enterprise had to present a plan for liquidation or for establishing a successor enterprise. The assets and the net win of the enterprise should be distributed as follows: 50% by land, 30% by assets brought in, and 20% by the length of the membership. The request to return assets had to be made within 7 years. This led to large-scale successor farm uncertainty and severe problems: over this time, it would be in an uncertain position concerning its assets. Additionally, there was the risk that those dissatisfied with the decision might pursue legal action, potentially keeping the final decision open for several years.[246] In Hungary, however, restitution was limited to 1992. Even those who did not bring land could claim a plot as their own, and the distribution should be at least 40 percent based on the length of membership.

In most Eastern European Countries, 1992 became a »window of opportunity« (Swain) to (re)start a family farm. Favorable start-up support was given to those who wanted to become farmers. After 1994, however, support was reduced or canceled in many countries, as it became too expensive and because many private farmers did not start producing for the market. »Socialist« small farming, as it existed in Hungary, seldom coped with the new market competition. Only in Russia, supplying oneself with additional food from the plots was still widespread and necessary in the countryside until the early 2000s. In all other countries, most private plots were soon converted into garden plots, losing their importance for feeding the people and producing for the market. Only in some cases did the proprietors successfully enlarge their private plots to become real family farms producing for the market.

Most managers envisioned their future in large-scale enterprises rather than in private farming, particularly in the GDR and the Czech Republic. They held important advantages: their commercial experience, familiarity with working with banks, business partners, and handling large sums of money. Additionally, they were members of networks that they could still utilize. Thus, they held the »social capital« that others lacked.[247] The success strongly depended on the qualifications of the managers. For restarting private farming, personal contacts with the farm managers opened access to capital and machinery. The farm managers held a decisive lead in information, which they did not share with others. Many of them used

246 Ibid., 1203–04. Merl, Agrarian transformations. In the GDR, uncertainty about the assets was a problem for the successor enterprises for a decade.

247 Swain, Agricultural Restitution, 1208–09. Merl, Agrarian transformations.

it to frighten the members by menacing (for example) with the cut of pensions. The better their farms were run before, the more successful the managers were. In these cases, they held authority and prestige among the members. The social and demographic profiles of the members also played a role. Older people and females, more willing to follow the arguments of the managers, dominated among them.[248] The reorganization process often took about a decade to complete.

Only in Hungary was the breaking up of the collective farms more likely, as bankruptcy legislation directly became effective. In the Czech Republic, and especially in Slovakia, many large-scale farms underwent a transformation to a new legal basis. That happened paradoxically due to the lack of bankruptcy legislation. In 1993/94, the number of corporate farms increased. Outsiders mostly did not risk starting farming privately. Many of the (previous) members increased the size of their private plots. In 1994, cooperaties and corporate bodies held nearly 74% of the land. Of the 23.2% in private hands, more than 80% were below 10 ha, and only 2% more than 100 ha (among them »residual estates«, returned to the heirs). In Slovakia, most voters on large-scale farms decided to retain this form. In 1994, they held 70% of the land, and nearly 5% was held by corporate bodies. Individual farms in Slovakia held only 5.2% of the land, 76% of them held less than 10 ha, and about 2% held more than 100 ha.[249]

In Hungary, the members initially decided to retain the cooperative farms. However, the political and economic pressure associated with the bankruptcy legislation altered the situation. More than a quarter of the large-scale farms were declared bankrupt. This became the lever to liquidate them. Their assets, however, were often retained, and the management used them as stepping stones in the creation of private, large-scale successor farms. Among those members who had already expanded their plots, only a few increased their production. In 1994, cooperative farms held 31.7% of the land, and private cooperative farms 35.9%. Individual farms held 32.4%, most of them under 10 ha in size.[250]

The specific features of the German case arose from the speed of the transformation during the process of German reunification and the fact that the new countries became part of the European Union from the beginning, which had fixed market rules and calculable prices. This was lacking in all other countries undergoing transformation, especially Russia. The majority of the former collective farms underwent significant changes in concept and survived. It took, however, roughly a decade to complete the transformation process. During this period, particularly in the early years, the share in landholding underwent significant changes. Corporate enterprises reduced their share in the New Countries

248 Swain, Agricultural Restitution, 1207–08.
249 Ibid., 1210–11.
250 Ibid., 1213–15.

from 90% to 51%, while the share of individual farms (including partnerships) rose from 10% to 49%. Only about one-third of the individual farms were formed »voluntarily«. At the same time, two-thirds arose due to the liquidation of the collective farms without a successor enterprise, leaving land proprietors with no other choice but to start cultivating the land themselves.[251] Most of the newly founded private farms on the territory of the former GDR, working under EU conditions, were significantly larger than the farms in West Germany. They even increased their medium size in that decade from 120 ha to 160 ha. Partnerships, included in private farms, often held several hundred hectares.[252]

Although the Helmut Kohl's government exercised pressure to return to private peasant farms, this had little effect. The time pressure set by the German government was decisive for the survival of most large-scale enterprises. The Agricultural Adaptation Law (Landwirtschaftsanpassungsgesetz) gave managers (APC) and workers only a few months to decide on the opening balance, the privatization proposal, and the future form of agricultural production. If no consensual vote by members and (separately counted) those with a right to assets was reached by the end of 1991, the large-scale farm went into liquidation, meaning that the management and the members lost control over the further process.[253]

In most cases, the votes were in favor of transforming the existing enterprise into a new legal form (»true« cooperative, Ltd). A decisive role in these votes was played by the »old debts«, causing uncertainty about what would be best for an individual. There was the risk of losing everything in the case of bankruptcy due to the »old debts«, which would then be subtracted from the value of the assets.

Making use of their »social capital«, the managers manipulated the outcome of the vote to give the successor enterprise a chance of survival. Only they held the real information on the farm and on the value of the assets. In the opening balance, the »reserves« were often manipulated to secure capital for the successor enterprise.[254] Managers who were disposing of the »trust« of the members often got a unanimous vote for their proposed concept and the opening balance. In only about 20% of the cases was such a proposal or vote missing, and the farms were subsequently liquidated through bankruptcy. Most transformed large-scale enterprises survived in the long run and adapted to market competition. Freed from state command and interference, and with access to high-quality equipment, many put their competitiveness to the test and made use of tax privileges and subsidies.[255]

251 Merl, Agrarian transformations, 136.
252 Ibid., 136–37.
253 Ibid., 131.
254 Ibid., 132–33.
255 Ibid., 131–32.

CONCLUSION

Stalin's combination of collectivization with class war was replicated in Eastern Europe, resulting in the same fatal consequences for the social and economic capital of agriculture as had occurred in the Soviet Union, and endangering the domestic food supply. The critique of Stalin's approach started in the Soviet Union. In June 1953, Beria and Malenkov put his infallibility in question. The revision of collectivization, which began in several East European countries, primarily Hungary, the GDR, and Czechoslovakia, was temporarily blocked by Khrushchev's insistence on completing collectivization instead of stabilizing the collective farms first. With his ideological approach, he exacerbated the disaster of Stalin's collectivization and caused the exodus of a more flexible workforce from agriculture. Hungary was the only country to make use of the potential of family labor already after 1953. Khrushchev's replacement opened the possibility of stabilizing the collective farms and implementing a concept of agricultural modernization, bringing agricultural production closer to industry. Since 1955, the Soviet Union has fallen behind most Eastern European countries in every aspect, including improving of the living conditions of collective farm members.

Blocked by the myth of agricultural mechanization under Stalin, the socialist countries began to modernize their agriculture only in the 1970s, two decades after the West. Consolidation required what Stalin refused to provide: substantial state investments in agriculture, payment for labor, and highly efficient machinery for large-scale farming. But the industrialization of agriculture was done as collectivization before: »on the cheap«, providing mass machinery and equipment to agriculture below the Western standard. In addition, at the order of the ruling parties, huge investments were wasted on changes in the size of production units, independent of economic necessities. Although since the 1970s, the heads of large-scale farms in general were highly qualified, the command economy did not allow them to run the farms based on their competence. The ruling parties retained control over agriculture and subsequently dictated the prices. Fighting against the cost trap of socialist agriculture, they paradoxically returned in the 1980s to support the cost-efficient small private agricultural production that Stalin and Khrushchev had tried to eliminate. While the bulk of the workforce was satisfied with working conditions and remuneration on the large-scale farms, the enterprises ultimately suffered economically due to an extreme lack of efficiency. Only after the end of the socialist regimes were they able to prove their competitiveness under market conditions by winning access to high-quality inputs.

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Peasant working cooperative Lacko from Maribor, Slovenia, planting potatoes, 1950.

Photo: Leon Jere, courtesy of: Museum of Contemporary History of Slovenia.

DIVERGENCE

Zsuzsanna Varga

Divergence from the Stalinist Model of Socialist Agriculture: The Case of Hungary

INTRODUCTION

By the end of the 1940s, Sovietization had advanced significantly in East-Central Europe, affecting both political life and the economy through nationalization. The exception was agriculture, where private property still dominated. Collectivization aimed to eliminate this through the widespread use of state violence. Due to strong peasant resistance, collectivization was interrupted several times and dragged on until the early 1960s.

In Hungary three collectivization campaigns took place: I. 1949–1953., II. 1955–1956, III. 1959–1961. The paper focuses on the relation between the Stalinist *kolkhoz* model and the collective farm that emerged and spread in Hungary.[1] Was it really a *kolkhoz* that was created in Hungary? The methodology that helps to answer this question is a combination of transfer studies and historical comparisons.[2]

1 In Hungary, the full name of the collective farm was »mezőgazdasági termelőszövetkezet« (agricultural producers cooperative). In Western academic literature, there is another widely used term: collective farm. This term will be used in my paper.

2 A volume edited by Heinz–Gerhard Haupt and Jürgen Kocka in 2009 describes the innovative cooperation between the approaches above – Haupt and Kocka, Comparative and Transnational History.

The first part of the paper describes how the Stalinist model of socialist agriculture was transplanted to Hungary.[3] The second part focuses on how the lessons of the 1956 revolution triggered debates about some aspects of the Soviet agricultural model. In the third part, the process of divergence during the 1960s will be analysed. Special attention will be paid to the agency of local actors and the mediating role of the agrarian lobby. Besides archival and statistical data sources, the paper also relies on oral history and contemporary press.

COPYING THE STALINIST MODEL AND ITS FAILURES

At the end of November 1948, Mátyás Rákosi, the General Secretary of the Hungarian Workers' Party (HWP)[4], announced the schedule for the establishment of socialist agriculture at a meeting of the HWP's Central Committee (CC). »Within three to four years we must get this question to the point where 90% of the Hungarian peasantry and 95% of Hungarian land is cultivated through proper socialist, joint, collective farming.«[5]

The three words Rákosi highlighted – socialist, joint, collective – made it clear that the individual peasant farms had to be replaced by Soviet *kolkhoz*es (collective farms). The *kolkhoz* was one of the main elements of Stalinist agriculture. The foundation of this complex system was that Stalin treated agriculture as an »inner colony«, i.e., subordinated its human and material resources to the interests of forced industrialization.[6] This required a farm organization that ensured not only the concentrated extraction of peasants' income but also the control and discriminatory treatment of the agricultural population.[7] Consequently, peasants were treated as second-class citizens.[8]

The Stalinist agriculture was based on three pillars. The machine and tractor station (MTS) served as a channel for supplying the state with crops and exerting political control over the countryside. The second pillar was the state-owned farm (*sovkhoz*). The third element was the artel-type collective farm (widely known as a *kolkhoz*).

3 Until the death of Stalin, the Soviet agricultural model was essentially a Stalinist model. However, after 1953, this model changed and became a »moving target«, a changing set of features, due to the Khrushchev reforms – Swain, Eastern European Collectivization Campaigns, 502–03. See also Swain, Decollectivization Politics; Varga, *The Hungarian Agricultural Miracle?,* 1–36.

4 The name of the Communist Party in Hungary between 1945–1948 was Hungarian Communist Party (HCP), between 1948–1956 Hungarian Workers' Party (HWP), and between 1956–1989 Hungarian Socialist Workers' Party (HSWP).

5 HU MNL OL M-KS 276. f. 52. cs. 4. ő. e. Jegyzőkönyv az MDP Központi Vezetőség 1948. november 27–i üléséről.

6 Viola, Collectivization, 49–77.

7 Merl, The role of agriculture.

8 Fitzpatrick, *Stalin's Peasants*, 48–79.

According to the Model Statute of February 17, 1935, the *kolkhoz* was a community of people who were joint users of the nationalized land of a given settlement, and who shared their farming equipment and animals.[9] From the communal land fund, a certain amount (¼–½ ha per *kolkhoz* family) was given for personal use, which was called the household farm. The members of the collective farm were carrying out the actual agricultural work together – within the framework of brigades and work teams – and therefore received payment for the communal work. The unit of measure for the work performed was the »work unit« (*trudoden*), which literally meant a working day. This unit expressed both the time expended and the nature and quantity of the given piece of work, but at the same time, it did not reflect the quality of the work completed. The *kolkhoz* leadership punished neglect of work according to the internal rules of the *kolkhoz*, while damage caused to state or *kolkhoz* property fell under the scope of Soviet criminal law. The *kolkhoz* was considered inferior to the *sovkhoz* because it was not the property of the entire society but of a smaller community or group. For this reason, the official ideology viewed the *kolkhoz* as a temporary solution that would evolve into a *sovkhoz* over time.

The Sovietization of agriculture in Hungary started with the increase in the area of existing, pre-war state farms.[10] From 1948 onwards, the building of the network of machine and tractor stations also gained momentum.[11] The introduction of the third element of Stalinist agriculture, the *kolkhoz*, came onto the agenda due to the Stalin–Tito split in late 1948. The HWP was thus compelled to act; alignment with the Soviet Union had to be demonstrated not only through statements, but also through actions as soon as possible.

The HWP leadership developed its initial tactics, taking into account the Hungarian peasantry's fear of the *kolkhoz* and its strong ties to privately owned land. Therefore, it promoted a gradual transition by allowing three types of collective farms.[12] The various types of collective farms were characteristic not only of the Hungarian case, but also of the collectivization process in East–Central Europe.[13] Parallel to this, market mechanisms in agriculture began to shut down. Compared to the previous period, the delivery quotas, taxes, and public charges proliferated.

9 On the characteristics of the operations of *kolkhoz* see: Davies, *The Soviet collective farm,* 75-97; Merl, *Bauern unter Stalin; Wädekin, The Soviet Kolkhoz*, 95–116.

10 Klenczner, Az állami gazdaságokról, 695–97.

11 Honvári, *A gépállomások története*, 81–144.

12 The essential difference lay in what portion of activity was carried out collectively, and, related to this, what proportion of income was allocated on the basis of labour executed or land contributed – Varga, *The Hungarian Agricultural Miracle?*, 44–48.

13 Swain, Eastern European Collectivization Campaigns, 497–534.

Based on the experiences gained in 1949, the Hungarian party leadership assessed that the expectations for the lower Type I and Type II collective farms had not been fulfilled. The membership considered them either as a supplement to their economy or as a hiding place where they could be relieved of the high taxes and compulsory deliveries. There was little interest in Type III which was most similar to the *kolkhoz*. As a response, the party leadership in early 1950 made it clear that the future of Hungarian agriculture would be the *kolkhoz*. A resolution adopted by the HWP's *Politburo* at its meeting of January 26, 1950, stated that the »... [Hungarian collective farm] will differ from the *kolkhoz* type only in that it will not yet farm on nationalised land.«[14]

Building on the 1935 *kolkhoz* statute, the model statute for Hungarian collective farms was drafted in 1951.[15] It stipulated that the members of the collective farm should share their farming equipment and livestock, thus creating the common property. It also provided for communal work (in the form of brigades and work teams) and stipulated that the work unit system should be used for both measuring and remunerating completed work. Membership in Hungary also gave the right to have a household farm.[16]

Continuing the elements introduced by the Model Statute of 1935, the activities of the collective farm were determined from outside, through the compulsory sowing plans defined by the party and state administrations. The membership, therefore, had no say in what and how a given collective farm produced. The membership cannot even decide how to use what it generated during the year. The Hungarian statute also copied the »remainder principle«, which gave priority to the enforcement of the state interest. The collective farm first had to fulfill its state obligations, then replenish the production funds for the following year, and only after all these were met, did the members (both in cash and in kind) receive their share for the work completed during the year. Consequently, the remuneration of the membership was low and insecure.

The above has already shown how *kolkhoz* members were treated as second-class citizens. This was also demonstrated by the fact that a member was not free to decide whether to leave the collective farm and take a job elsewhere. In the Soviet Union, a *kolkhoz* member, like a serf, had to ask permission to leave the village.[17] In Hungary, this was regulated in such a way that it was not allowed to

14 HU MNL OL M-KS 276. f. 53. cs. 44. ő. e. Jegyzőkönyv az MDP Politikai Bizottság 1950. január 26–án tartott üléséről.

15 8.010/1951. (I. 20.) F. M. sz. rendelet az önálló termelőszövetkezet alapszabályának és a termelőszövetkezeti csoportok működési szabályzatának egységes szerkezetben való közzétételéről. *Törvények és rendeletek*, 619–28.

16 In 1950–51, the area for the household plot was 0.14–0.28 ha. Animals allowed: 1 cow, 1 calf, 1 sow and her piglets, 5 sheep or goats, unlimited poultry, rabbits and bees, 1–2 fattening pigs – ibidem.

17 Fitzpatrick, *Stalin's Peasants*, 95–102.

go for 3 years after entry. The Hungarian Model Statute also stipulated a minimum number of work units as a precondition for a household farm. No matter how much land a Hungarian peasant had brought into the collective farm, if he/she did not meet the minimum work requirement, he/she was not eligible for the tiny household plot.

The Stalinist *kolkhoz* was so alien in Hungary that, although a wide range of state violence was used during the first collectivization campaign from 1949, the peasantry showed strong resistance. Although the well-to-do groups of the village society (*kulaks*) were destroyed in a short time, most of the middle and small peasants did not join the collective farm.[18] At the beginning of 1953, the new large socialist farms were cultivating barely 40% of the arable land, whereas according to Rákosi's original timetable, 90% should have been reached by then. So, the target was not achieved. Meanwhile, the Hungarian agricultural sector has undergone complete disintegration, and production has declined dramatically. This is demonstrated by the fact that Hungarian agriculture only reached its pre-war level in 1951, a year with extremely favorable weather conditions.[19]

Similar agricultural problems arose in other countries of the Soviet bloc. After Stalin's death in March 1953, in order to increase agricultural production, Soviet leaders (Nikita Khrushchev, Georgy Malenkov) advised their allies to stop the forced collectivization and allow peasants to leave the collective farms, reduce their tax burdens and compulsory delivery quotas.[20] The implementation of de-Stalinization in Hungary was entrusted to the new Prime Minister, Imre Nagy, due to his expertise in agriculture.[21] After the initial »firefighting measures«, Imre Nagy initiated a longer-term agricultural development program. Instead of copying the Soviet model, the emphasis was on taking into account domestic conditions and pre-war traditions and experiences.[22]

This renewal of Hungarian agricultural policy had far-reaching consequences. It not only led to a decollectivization and a boom in individual farming, but also to more expansive room for manoeuvre of the »surviving collective farms«. It is worth briefly mentioning the grassroots initiatives, which can be seen as the first steps towards independent farming. A general tendency in the collective farms that survived the de-collectivization in 1953 was to change both the *kolkhoz*-type remuneration (work unit system) and the work organization.[23] Different forms of premisation supplemented the work unit system. In many places, there

18 Ö. Kovács, The Forced Collectivization. Varga, Three waves, 262–73.
19 Pető and Szakács, *A hazai gazdaság,* 207–11.
20 Swain, Eastern European Collectivization Campaigns, 505–06.
21 Rainer M, *Imre Nagy*, 38–51.
22 Varga, *Az agrárlobbi tündöklése,* 25–43.
23 HU MNL OL M-KS 276. f. 93. cs. 508. ő. e. A PB által kiküldött Termelőszövetkezeti Bizottság iratai, 1954.

was a return to sharecropping. István Szabó, president of the Red Star Collective Farm in Nádudvar, recalled it in a detailed way.

> Take the cultivation of corn, for example. Until then, the fields were hoed by brigades, without anyone controlling the quality of the hoeing, either individually or per brigade. Under the new system, the ploughing and sowing were done by the collective farm, and individual families or kinship groups did the hoeing and harvesting on the land *they undertook*. They hoed when and as often as they wanted. However, whatever the harvest, they were entitled to 20 per cent of it in addition to the fixed amount of work units. Until then, they would only start hoeing when the last, laziest member of the brigade was in sight. Now they were in the field from sunrise, waiting for no one. As far as possible, we used the same method for other crops. [...] After the first year's harvest, everyone became an enthusiastic believer in the system. [...] The party organizations found it harder to give in.[24]

Similar grassroots initiatives before 1953 were considered a capitalist leftover. In the second half of 1953, a group began to form around Imre Nagy, which took a different view. Among the defining figures of the group, it is worth mentioning Ferenc Erdei, Lajos Fehér, Ferenc Donáth, and Ferenc Fekete. They thought that these grassroots initiatives should not be rejected, but rather studied carefully, because they could help make collective farming more attractive in the future. The majority of the agricultural administration, especially the Ministry of Agriculture, remained dismissive.[25]

Every stratum of the rural population welcomed post-Stalinist corrections. However, hardly two years passed when, in the spring of 1955, Imre Nagy was forced to resign, and Mátyás Rákosi regained power. He and his supporters returned to the Stalinist policies. In the agrarian sector, this meant an increase in taxes and delivery quotas, as well as the resumption of forceful campaigns to drive people into the collectives.[26] This second collectivization campaign caused a deep crisis in the countryside by the summer of 1956. Thus, the outbreak of the revolution on October 23, 1956, struck the villages in this uproarious situation.

24 Under his leadership, the collective farm has developed into one of the largest and most successful one in the country. This collective farm has always been at the forefront of innovation – Romsics, *Szabó István életútja,* 59–61.

25 HU MNL OL M-KS 276. f. 93. cs. 508. ő. e. Jegyzőkönyv a FM Tsz Főosztályán 1954. augusztus 3–án tartott tsz. csoport vezetői értekezletről.

26 Varga, Three waves, 273–78.

LESSONS FROM THE 1956 REVOLUTION AND THE FINAL PHASE OF COLLECTIVIZATION

The publications of urban events still dominate the historiography of the 1956 revolution. This could be explained by the fact that the armed struggles were concentrated in the capital and the main industrial centres. The essence of the »quiet revolution of the villages«, however, was not armed struggle, but multi-dimensional and multi-layered self-organization. These rural communities, where peasants still constituted the majority, quickly and clearly formulated their political and economic demands in late October, early November 1956.[27]

The new government, which came to power with Soviet military assistance on November 4, 1956, was headed by János Kádár. He was holding the position of General Secretary of the Hungarian Socialist Workers' Party (HSWP) at the same time. Faced with a nationwide general strike by industrial workers, the government was forced to compromise with the other large group in Hungarian society, the peasantry. The Kádár government halted the second collectivization campaign and abolished the compulsory delivery system, which had been one of the fundamental elements of the Stalinist agricultural model. Hungary was the first socialist country to take this step, the most enduring impact of which was the revival, albeit to a limited degree, of market mechanisms in agriculture.[28]

As a result of all of the measures listed above, two-thirds of collective farms were dissolved, and at the same time, several hundred thousand peasant farms began work anew. The bulk of land-owning peasants left the collectives. At the same time, the majority of the landless and smallholders, in the absence of any other possibility for making a living, decided to remain in the collective farm.[29] These surviving collective farms became very valuable to the Kádár regime, as they were proof that the foundations of socialist agriculture had been laid. In November, the government declared: »The government deems it necessary to draft a law on collective farms which states that peasants should themselves choose the form of cooperation, determine the operating rules and decide on the method of remuneration. The government will tolerate no interference in cooperative affairs.«[30]

In this climate, the surviving collective farms, on the one hand, wanted to achieve independence from the organs that had previously interfered in their

27 See more on this in my sub–chapter »Demands of the peasantry during 1956« – Varga, *The Hungarian Agricultural Miracle?*, 83–90.

28 Ibid., 92-93

29 HU MNL OL M–KS 288. f. 28. cs. (1957) 17. ő. e. Megyei jelentések a termelőszövetkezeti mozgalom helyzetéről.

30 *Magyar Közlöny*, November 27, 1956, 580.

farming (the party, the council, the banks, the machine and tractor stations) and the party itself. In contrast, they wanted to regulate their internal affairs independently. As their members wished to obtain a regular income throughout the year, rather than relying on the work unit with its uncertain value, the majority of collective farms transitioned to a system of in-kind shares, in the form of either sharecropping or various types of bonuses.[31] The leaders of the Ministry of Agriculture strongly attacked these grassroots initiatives, which pushed state interests into the background. The following passage from a contemporary speech of Imre Dögei, the Minister of Agriculture, illustrates their views.

> There's a lot of talk and chatter these days about how each collective farm should draw up its statute, distribute its income as it wishes, and we should not interfere, [...] This, comrades, is nothing less than the purposeful, subversive work of the enemy. We are not going to stand for it. We say there is no point you chattering about Hungarian uniqueness this and Hungarian uniqueness that, you have brought nothing new to the table, you have not created anything better than the model statute, you have not come up with a better model of income distribution than the work unit, only something worse, and we therefore stand by it.[32]

At the same time, another group in the leadership, led by Lajos Fehér, head of the Agricultural Department of the HSWP' Central Committee, argued that these grassroots initiatives would make members interested in improving the quality of production, in increasing yields and reducing costs and that this served the interests of the state, too.[33] »Collective farms' members, like others, do not like their every step to be regulated in advance, to be "spoon fed".« That is why the opportunity must be provided for collectives, while maintaining fundamental socialist principles, to modify their operating rules to local circumstances, to make them more flexible, so that the membership has a better sense that it is the valid owner of their collective farm.[34]

The debate mentioned above also signalled that these two groups had different views on how to complete collectivization. The leaders of the Ministry continued to adhere unconditionally to the Stalinist agricultural policy, the main elements of which they considered unchangeable. The group around Lajos Fehér, the emerging agrarian lobby, wanted to develop the HSWP's agricultural policy by avoiding the pre-1956 mistakes and considering Hungarian conditions and peasant interests. When Soviet pressure brought collectivization back on the agenda in 1958, a new debate began between these two groups. Kádár finally

31 Varga, The Impact.
32 HU MNL ZML Zala Megyei Levéltár XXXV 1. f. 1957. 2. ő. e. Jegyzőkönyv az MSZMP Zala Megyei Nagyaktíva üléséről 1957. május 29.
33 Papp, *Fehér Lajos*, 202–25. Varga, *Az agrárlobbi*, 66–82.
34 Fehér, *A magyar mezőgazdaság*, 36.

started collectivization in early 1959, relying on the dogmatic line. The party and state organs involved in the collectivization used a wide range of violence, including physical, administrative, criminal, and psychological violence.[35]

It was the third attempt within a decade to turn Hungarian peasant farms into large socialist farms. During the 1950s, peasants had developed their resistance and survival strategies and reacted to the new campaign with them. Their experience showed that they could expect low and insecure income from the collectives because of the work-unit system and the »remainder principle«. Families, therefore, contributed their less valuable labour (elderly family members, women) to the collective farms. Men of working age, on the other hand, took jobs in the cities and became daily or long-distance commuters.[36]

A further problem was that many of the new members only completed the minimum amount of work on the collective farm needed to qualify for the household farm. Members could expect a low level of income from the collective farm, so it was more worthwhile to concentrate their efforts on the household farm.[37] The above-mentioned forms of »everyday resistance« were easy to trace in the weekly and monthly reports that were sent from both the HSWP district committees and the agricultural departments of local councils to the Agricultural Department of the HSWP Central Committee.

> In many collective farms, especially in the Transdanubian counties, there is a weak work discipline. Members who used to work early in the morning until late in the evening on their farms now don't want to work more than 8 hours a day in the collective, even at the busiest times. ... the weak work discipline is also the reason why some 15,000 ha of corn remained unharvested nationwide and in some Transdanubian counties the treshing of grain was not completed until the first days of October.[38]

During 1959, it became increasingly clear that the ministry under Imre Dögei was not able to deal with these growing problems. In this situation, the proposals of the other group, led by Lajos Fehér, were appreciated more than ever before. Lajos Fehér, Ferenc Erdei, and their fellows referred to the collectives that survived de-collectivization both in 1953 and in 1956. Their local initiatives were analyzed by two research institutes of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences (the Institute of Economics and the Institute of Agricultural Economics).[39] The

35 Ö. Kovács, The Forced Collectivization, 225–27.
36 *Mezőgazdaságunk*, 174–75.
37 HU MNL OL M-KS 288. f. 17. cs. 5. ő. e. A Központi Statisztikai Hivatal feljegyzése a paraszti családok és a paraszti népesség számának alakulásáról, 1960. november.
38 HU MNL OL M-KS 288. f. 28. cs. (1959) 9. ő.e. Jelentés a tsz–ekben a mezőgazdasági munkák helyzetének vizsgálata során szerzett tapasztalatokról, 1959. November.
39 The latter one was headed by Ferenc Erdei and become a backbone of the agrarian lobby.

analyses have proved that these local initiatives bring better results (e.g., higher yields) than the work unit system.[40] Although these collective farms diverged from the Soviet *kolkhoz* model, their results were convincing enough for the party leadership to correct the midpoint of collectivization. The replacement of the dogmatic Minister of Agriculture, Imre Dögei, symbolised this. The new minister, Pál Losonczi, was a reform-minded collective farm president in Barcs (Somogy county).[41] On the other hand, at its meeting of February 16, 1960, the *Politburo* decided that local initiatives differing from the *kolkhoz* model should be allowed in the practice of the collective farms.[42]

To understand the changes in Hungarian agricultural policy, it is necessary to recall the international context, especially the changing Soviet expectations. As has already been mentioned, the Stalinist collective model was in force at the time when the collectivization process in East-Central Europe was launched. Later, however, de-Stalinization and the events of 1956 in Poland and Hungary had a significant impact on Soviet policy-makers. When the Soviet leadership initiated the completion of collectivization in the late 1950s, it tolerated that neither Yugoslavia nor Poland had fulfilled this task, and their agriculture continued to be dominated by small-scale farms. On the other hand, those countries that resumed collectivization were allowed to modify some aspects of the Soviet model (e.g., dismantling of machine-tractor stations, abolition of compulsory deliveries, liberalization of *kulak* policy, allowing different types of cooperation).[43] Khrushchev also hoped that providing more room for manoeuvre to the satellite countries would help them to produce their own food needs rather than constantly demanding grain from the Soviet Union.[44] Khrushchev devoted exceptional attention to stimulating agricultural production because of the economic competition »catching up and surpassing« the USA in twenty years (1960–1980). This applied not only to industrial, but also to agricultural production.[45]

40 Varga, Agricultural Economics.
41 Bertalan, Somogyországtól a miniszteri székig, 288–330.
42 HU MNL OL M–KS 288. f. 5. cs. 170. ő. e. Jegyzőkönyv az MSZMP Politikai Bizottság 1960. február 16–i üléséről.
43 Swain, Eastern European Collectivization Campaigns, 525–29.
44 HU MNL OL M–KS 288. f. 23. cs. 43. ő. e. A KSH jelentése a külkereskedelmi forgalom alakulásáról, 1960–1963, 1963.
45 Taubman, *Khrushchev*, 325–60.

GRASSROOTS INITIATIVES AND CHANGING POLITICAL RESPONSES

Collectivization was completed in Hungary by February 1961. After that, the question arose again: how to make the collective farms work? By eliminating the aforementioned temporary compromises and returning them to the *kolkhoz* model, or by allowing room for grassroots initiatives? My research has shown that the reconciliation of interests was further strengthened through the mediation of the agrarian lobby group around Lajos Fehér. This was because for the Kádár-regime, the performance of agriculture was critical, as a stable food supply was the main factor in the »living standard policy« initiated after 1956 to improve the living standards of the society.

From time to time, the Ministry of Agriculture, headed by Pál Losonczi, published its recommendations on remuneration and work organisation.[46] In particular, it proposed solutions which, although they deviated from the model statute, were more of an interest booster for the membership than the work-unit system. Since the collective farms were under the close control of party and state authorities, many problems arose when the staff of the local apparatus still adhered to Stalinist, dogmatic views that they had been taught before 1956.

The agrarian lobby sought to encourage cooperative leaders through the contemporary press to apply the Ministry's recommendations. The lobby established good relations with the media (press, radio).[47] This way it gained regular forums for its views as evidenced by the following article published in the HSWP's daily newspaper, *Népszabadság*. »In several counties and districts, there was also a certain rigidity and incorrect attitude towards the tried and tested forms of income distribution and premiums proposed by the Ministry of Agriculture. In many cases, the district and county authorities prevented the cooperative members from applying the best solutions. [...].«[48] The dogmatic groups of the apparatus argued that the proper socialist form of work organisation was the brigade and that of remuneration was the work unit. In their view, »everything is forbidden that is not expressly permitted«. In contrast, the members of the agrarian lobby, the leaders of the Ministry, argued that »what is not expressly forbidden is permitted«. As a result, there were huge local differences in the implementation of the HWSP's agricultural policy in the early 1960s.[49]

46 The recommendations were published in the ministry's *Agricultural Bulletin*, which was posted to all collective farms.

47 Varga, *The Hungarian Agricultural Miracle?*, 153–62.

48 *Népszabadság*, December 8, 1961, 2, Hogyan fokozhatjuk a szövetkezeti tagok anyagi érdekeltségét.

49 Varga, *The Hungarian Agricultural Miracle?,* 147–53.

The agrarian lobby around Lajos Fehér tried to deal with this problem in the following way. It organized training courses for the district and county agricultural administration. High-ranking members of the lobby travelled extensively to the countryside, creating forums for an intensive exchange of information with the local politicians and cooperative leaders.[50] This way, they mapped out their regional allies, with whom they maintained constant contact.

Through this specific dialogue, year after year, more and more local initiatives were moved from the prohibited or tolerated category to the supported category, thus increasing the divergence from the *kolkhoz* model. However, a major problem remained: the legal regulations did not reflect the forms of remuneration and work organisation justified by practice. Thus, in the first half of the 1960s, the *de jure* and *de facto* conditions in the life of the collective farms differed significantly.

To remedy this problem, the agrarian lobby initiated a complex reform at the turn of 1961–1962. One of the elements of this was the drafting of a new law on collective farms, to bring the legislation into line with the proven grassroots initiatives of work organization and remuneration.[51] With the new law, the agrarian lobby sought to achieve even more, aiming to legalize a new concept that was utterly different from Stalinist logic. It was based on two principles: self-management and legal equality with state-owned companies.

The implementation of the new principles required changes not only in the legal system, but also in economic regulation (price, tax, credit policy, etc.) and the agricultural administration, since many decision-making powers had to be reassigned to the collective farms. All three parts of the agricultural reform were completed by the end of 1963. However, their introduction in early 1964 was postponed.[52] This can be explained by the fact that other areas of the economy were also showing increasing signs of crisis (efficiency problems in the industry, external trade imbalances, etc.), and these were occupying the attention of the party leadership.

As numerous ministries, authorities, and research institutes were involved in the elaboration of the complex agricultural reform between 1961 and 1963, they thus contributed to a broad discourse not only on the problems of socialist agriculture but also on the planned economy in general. When, a few years later, in 1966, due to the worsening economic situation, the HWSP leadership decided to elaborate a general economic reform, the New Economic Mechanism (NEM), it

50 In addition to Ferenc Erdei and Lajos Fehér, Pál Losonczi and István Dobi also played an important role in this respect – Interview with Imre Dimény (born 1922).

51 HU MNL OL M-KS 288. f. 28. cs. 2. ő.e. Előterjesztés a Mezőgazdasági Bizottsághoz az új termelőszövetkezeti törvény előkészítésével kapcsolatos főbb vitás kérdések eldöntésére, 1962. szeptember 16.

52 Varga, *The Hungarian Agricultural Miracle,* 158–60.

became possible to revisit the previous agricultural reform plans. While the NEM was introduced on 1 January 1968, the agrarian lobby had already implemented several major changes in 1966/67, based on the 1963 concept.[53] Credit consolidation and price reform were carried out in favor of the collective farms, and the machine stations were abolished, and their machines became the property of the collective farms. As will be discussed in the following, in 1967, the Parliament adopted two major laws, and the interest representation bodies of the collective farms were established.

As a result of a lengthy consultation process and heated debates in the HSWP leadership, in the fall of 1967, the Hungarian Parliament accepted two laws that defined the economic and social relations of collective farms for the next twenty years. Law III on collective farms aimed to resolve the discrepancy between their practice and legal regulations. As the introduction of the law clearly indicated, »The primary purpose of the new regulation is to express those basic features of the operation of collective farms that have taken shape following developments in the past years.«[54] As previously mentioned, there were three major areas where collective farms diverged from the *kolkhoz* model: remuneration, work organization, and household farming. These widespread grassroots initiatives were successfully included in Law III of 1967. The other important law (Law IV of 1967) was revising land ownership and land use within the collective farms. Alongside private and state land ownership, a new type of land ownership emerged: cooperative ownership. This was created by offering landowners who were not collective farm members (e.g., those who had left to work in other sectors or had inherited land from their parents) the decision within a given timeframe: either join the collective farm or sell their land to the collective at a low price set by the state. This was therefore a hidden nationalization, which, however, did not affect the private property of those who were active or retired collective farm members.[55]

Law III of 1967 was built on the concepts of self-management and legal equality. The law granted collective farms the right to decide on their production and their operating plans. This law specified that collective farms were independent legal entities, and consequently, they had no administrative superior organizations in the party-state apparatus. The law also stated that the property of the collective farms was on an equal footing with state property. It even noted that household farming was an integral part of the collective farm. This is important because previously, the household farm was considered only a temporarily

53 HU MNL OL M–KS 288. f. 28. cs. 8. ő. e. Előterjesztés az új termelőszövetkezeti törvény irányelveiről, 1966.

54 Fóris, *Mezőgazdasági termelőszövetkezeti törvény*, 172.

55 Dániel Luka's PhD dissertation provides a detailed analysis of the genesis of the Law IV of 1967 – Luka, Földbirtokpolitika Magyarországon.

tolerated concession until the peasantry – as the propaganda repeatedly stated – could free itself from its previous backward views (adherence to private property, etc.).[56]

Laying the foundations for independent farming activities required, first of all, securing the financial background. The agrarian lobby's starting point was the following: the difficulties of the incentive system within the collective farms would not disappear as long as the distorted price system remains in effect. The goal of the price increases and credit concessions that took place in 1966/67, therefore, was to lay the foundations for the ability to self-finance. The majority of collective farms became capable of independent enterprise-like farming. One of the most important and consciously maintained restrictions in this field was investment policy.[57] The collective farms could not fully finance their investments from their income.

Many changes were introduced in the area of income distribution, the most important of which was the abolishment of the »remainder principle. This was of tremendous significance. As mentioned earlier, however much the collective farms endeavored to find ever better incentive solutions for their memberships, the efficiency of local initiatives remained restricted because of the »remainder principle«. Law III of 1967 stipulated that the wages paid to members over the year should be considered production costs, and it also specified that their payment preceded the state's demands.[58]

From 1967 onwards, they, like all industrial workers and employees, deserved a guaranteed wage, which was regularly paid. The decree that implemented Law III of 1967 also passed measures about remuneration, allowing collective farms to make use of any form of remuneration that conformed to the principle of »socialist income distribution«. Instead of the former centralized regulation, this became the responsibility of the collective farm's general meeting. »The collective farm establishes how labour is measured and remunerated, whether based on meeting work norms, the amount of time spent, or a share of production (yield), etc.«[59]

Aiming for an independent, enterprise-like farming system, a significant amount of decision-making power had to be transferred from the state administration to the collective farms. Previously, their activities had been administratively directed by district and county party organs and councils, state-owned purchasing companies, and bank branches, using partly political pressure and economic tools, granting or revoking credits and subsidies to influence production.

56 Kovách, Hungary.
57 Fóris, *Mezőgazdasági termelőszövetkezeti törvény*, 172.
58 Ibid., 68–69.
59 Ibid., 110.

One of the basic principles of Law III was that collective farms would independently decide about their production structure. After 1967, it was still compulsory to prepare a plan and farm according to it, but the plan was not submitted for official approval by any administrative body. Law III of 1967 abolished the previous limits placed on their sphere of activity. The limitations of the Soviet *kolkhoz* model had long prevented collective farms from engaging in supplementary activities beyond crop cultivation and animal husbandry, even though there had been traditions of this in Hungary in the past, both on pre-war large estates and peasant farms. Reference can be made to the extent of village household industry, woodworking, carting, and food processing.[60]

The new regulations defined the activities of collective farms to permit food processing, procurement, sales, and services in addition to agricultural production. They could utilize their facilities and equipment not only for their own needs, but also for state-owned enterprises, institutions, associations, and the public directly.[61] Collective farms could sell products, from either the communal farm or household plots, not only to purchasing enterprises, but also to petty commerce, the hospitality industry, public bodies, industrial users, and foreign trade enterprises. Furthermore, they could open their shops to sell their produce.

One of the consequences of recognizing independent, enterprise-like farming was that Law III of 1967, then, established the equal legal status of collective farms, but some difficulties remained. The main problem with state purchasing enterprises was that they were in almost exclusive possession of the facilities and qualified workforce necessary for bringing agricultural products to market. This situation changed only gradually as the processing and sales activities of collective farms expanded. Many problems also arose from the fact that the state-owned banks held a strong monopolistic position, rendering the negotiating power of collective farms, for example, in the area of credit, weak.

Outdated model statutes had to be repealed if self-management was to be achieved. The framework provided by Law III of 1967 enabled collective farms to adapt their organizational structure to their specific circumstances.[62] In general, it could be summarized that all essential issues – income distribution, work organization, remuneration, etc. – have been returned to the competence of the general assembly from external organizations.

Before 1967, the procedure for administering the collective farms was not regulated by law, but rather by their statutes. From 1967 onwards, by contrast, the rights and duties of the membership, together with the sphere of authority

60 Juhász, Agrárpiac, 24–50.
61 Fóris, *Mezőgazdasági termelőszövetkezeti törvény*, 56.
62 Csizmadia, A vállalati önállóság.

and legal status of the president, the leadership, and various committees, were all defined by the established law.[63] As far as these matters were concerned, Law III of 1967 mostly just repeated what the 1963 reform package had contained. However, this new Law brought an important innovation: the collective farm membership elected its president by secret ballot.[64]

The significance of Law III of 1967 is even more apparent when compared to the Soviet legislation of the time. As already mentioned at the beginning of this paper, the 1935 model *Kolkhoz* Statute was not replaced by a new one until 1969. The document was adopted at the Third National Congress of *Kolkhoz*es on November 27, 1969.[65] Although it contained many new elements, it did not change its function: it continued to regulate the functioning of the *kolkhoz*es in a binding manner. In contrast, Hungarian Law III of 1967 did not even contain a model statute. To guarantee the autonomy of the collective farms and to encourage internal regulation, it left it to the general assembly to draw up their statutes according to valid legal regulations, while also reflecting local characteristics.

Even after 1969, the *kolkhoz*es were still bound by the system of compulsory sowing plans, compulsory deliveries, and the »remainder principle«. The activities of *kolkhoz*es were restricted to crop production, livestock farming, and cottage industry, as in 1935. The Soviet party-state still did not give the *kolkhoz* membership the right to adapt the *kolkhoz* to local conditions and needs.[66]

The increased decision-making power of the general assembly of the Hungarian collective farm was evident in its ability to elect its president by secret ballot. Collective farms were the first such economic organisations in socialist Hungary. In the new situation after 1967, it no longer made sense to maintain the three-year ban on leaving the collective farm, allowing a member to leave at any time, at their discretion. In the Soviet Union, the consent of 2/3 of the membership was still required for a *kolkhoz* member to leave the *kolkhoz* and receive the internal passport necessary for employment in the city.

The recognition of the long-term existence of household farming and its »true socialist nature« was one of the fundamental elements of the Hungarian agricultural reform. Law III of 1967 stated that the household farm was an integral part of the collective farm and legalized its role in commodity production as well. This was in two ways contrary to the Soviet concept. On the one hand, in the Soviet Union, the existence of household farming was expected only for a temporary period. On the other hand, its function was reduced to mere self-sufficiency.

63 Fóris, *Mezőgazdasági termelőszövetkezeti törvény*, 16–49.
64 Ibid., 26.
65 Varga, *The Hungarian Agricultural Miracle?,* 13–17.
66 Ibid., 190–95.

CONCLUSION

In this study, I interpreted collectivization in Hungary as a transfer of the Soviet agricultural model. This model only began to change after Stalin's death. All of this had a significant impact on how some East–Central European countries continued and completed collectivization, while others (Yugoslavia, Poland) stopped and never finished the process.

The methodology of transfer studies greatly aided in exploring Soviet commands from the late 1940s to the early 1960s. In this way, I was able to identify not only changes over time, but also the changing expectations towards the individual bloc countries. Hungary, for example, became a country of greater importance to the Soviet party leadership after the 1956 Revolution.

In the context of changing Soviet instructions, the methods employed by local mediators during the transfer also evolved during the examined period. In response to these, different groups of peasant society have developed various strategies of resistance and adaptation. As a result of these factors, a divergence from the Soviet model began in Hungarian agriculture.[67]

This made it possible for another transfer in the 1960s. As an outlook, it is also important to note that Hungarian agriculture was influenced by Western technology and knowledge transfer. Its first phase coincided with the completion of collectivization. Faced with the problems of the new socialist large-scale farms, the Hungarian party leadership decided to adopt Western technology that would enable meat production to be quickly boosted. Already in 1960, a Hungarian delegation purchased the most modern »chicken factory« at the time from a West German company.[68] This early opening to the West naturally could not have taken place without the approval of the Soviet leadership. Following the suppression of the 1956 uprising, Moscow accorded greater room for maneuver, especially in agrarian policy. Food supply became a strategic issue for the Kádár regime, which attempted to compensate for its lack of political legitimacy through a »policy of living standards«. Since meat production requires a stable fodder base, Hungary purchased the first John Deere machinery complexes from the United States in 1969 as part of the second phase of Western technology transfer.[69]

Initially, state farms played a key role in Western transfers, and then, as the Hungarian collective farms deviated from the Soviet model, they became capable of integrating capitalist closed-production systems. As a result, the 1970s brought

67 A group of Hungarian historians interprets this process differently. For summary of their views in English, see: Csikós, Horváth, and Ö. Kovács, The Sovietization of rural Hungary.

68 Varga, *The Hungarian Agricultural Miracle?*, 162–67.

69 Ibid., 201–07.

a rapid boom in Hungarian hybrid agriculture.[70] It was a unique achievement within the Council for Mutual Economic Assistance (COMECON), often labelled by the Western media as the »Hungarian agricultural miracle«.[71] Today's evaluations are more critical due to the socio-natural costs, such as the dissolution of the symbiotic relationship between arable and livestock farming, as well as environmental consequences (including the nitrification of groundwater, soil erosion, and soil compaction).

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70 In per capita value of agricultural production, Hungary rated sixth in the world by the early 1980s.
71 Berend, *From the Soviet bloc*, 31–33.

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Interview

Author's interview with Imre Dimény (born 1922), Budapest, 9 February 2010. (recording is kept by the author)

Eduard Kubů,
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Socialist Agricultural Cooperatives in the Bohemian Lands (1948–1989)

INTRODUCTION

The historiography of Czechoslovak cooperativism after the Second World War is surprisingly extensive, especially in the Bohemian Lands.[1] It focuses mainly on the development of agrarian cooperatives.* This was both economically important and of fundamental, if not crucial, political importance in the 1950s. The social and even cultural effects of changing the quality of rural life cannot be overlooked. The literature of the 1950s is characterized by the strong influence of an ideology that emphasized the »connection of the working class with the agricultural countryside.« In some cases, it is outright manipulative of the facts. It completely glosses over the violent course of the so-called »collectivization of the countryside« (i.e., the creation of socialist collective farms), the abundant violations of existing law, and the construction of political processes with the

1 We use the term Bohemian Lands in a common sense, i.e., involving Bohemia, Moravia, and (former Austrian) Silesia.

* Eduard Kubů's research was supported by The Ministry of Agriculture of the Czech Republic [Ministerstvo zemědělství České republiky], Institutional Funding [institucionální podpora] RO0825. Jan Slavíček's research was supported by the University [Univerzita] Hradec Králové.

aim of political control of the countryside. Similarly, it ignores the environmental problems that collectivization has brought about (devastation of the soil stock through chemicalization, over-drying of the soil through excessive land reclamation, etc.).[2] This ideological framework loosened slightly in the second half of the 1960s when a few more critical publications appeared. However, the original interpretive paradigm returned during the so-called »normalization« period (1968–1989), albeit in a more moderate form. This was only disrupted again during the so-called *perestroika* period in the second half of the 1980s when more realistic perspectives and interpretations reappeared.[3] Cooperative historiography developed in a similar way in Slovakia.[4]

In contrast to the regime's literature, the extensive historiographical production after 1989 definitively breaks away from the »Marxist-Leninist class understanding« of the process of collectivization and tries to set the record straight on its distortions and results. It focuses on the methods of managing collectivization from above and the accompanying persecutions, the agricultural policy of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia (CPC), and the resistance to collectivization violence.[5] In the last two decades, however, books and studies have also been published focusing on the legal, economic, and social aspects of the development of socialist agriculture.[6] The actual process of collectivization is mainly dealt with regionally and locally. Several chapters in a collective monograph published by the Slovácko Museum in Uherské Hradiště have been devoted to the topic of agricultural cooperatives in communist Czechoslovakia.[7] Our paper addresses the development of agricultural cooperatives throughout the entire period of communist Czechoslovakia. It is an overview of a synthetic character and summarizes the current state of research.

At the outset, it is necessary to define the basic concept. The »socialist« cooperatives of 1948–1989 differed fundamentally in their goals, tasks, and actual functioning from the classical cooperatives we know from the preceding period (and in the West afterward). The latter functioned as market entities with full decision-making autonomy (or at least a considerable degree of independence) and internal democratic mechanisms. On the other hand, the former were

2 Jech, *Probuzená vesnice*.

3 All four stages of the development of communist cooperative historiography (concerning not only agricultural but all cooperatives) are demonstrated in the works of top cooperative expert Karel Martin Pernica: Šorm, Pernica, and Větvička, *Dějiny družstevního hnutí. III. díl*; Pernica, *Družstevnictví*; Pernica, *Úvod*; Pernica; *Socialistické družstevnictví*.

4 For example, Cambel, *Kapitoly*; Cambel, *Formovanie*.

5 Blažek and Kubálek (eds.), *Kolektivizace*. Boštík, *Venkov bez mezí*. Cihlář, *Vesnice severovýchodních Čech*. Jech, *Kolektivizace*. Rokoský and Svoboda, *Kolektivizace v Československu*.

6 Kopeček, Přední JZD. Urban, *Kolektivizace*. Kuklík, *Znárodněné Československo*. Václavů, *Ke sporům*. Březina and Pernes (eds.), *Závěrečná fáze*. Burešová, The Collectivization.

7 Rašticová (ed.), *Osudy*.

cooperatives, largely only in formal legal terms. They were production and sometimes distribution units of a centrally planned economy. In both their external and internal activities, they were subject to the decisions of the ruling regime. This did not preclude the growth/existence of a specific, minimal degree of autonomy in cooperative activities on occasion. However, this autonomy could be – and mostly was – again restricted.[8]

BASELINE: PRE-WAR, WARTIME, AND THIRD-REPUBLIC AGRICULTURAL COOPERATIVES (UNTIL 1948)

Cooperativism in the Bohemian Lands had a profound tradition born at the beginning of the second half of the 19th century in credit cooperatives of the Schulze-Delitzsch type. In the 1890s, a boom in the development of Raiffeisen-type cooperatives followed. These were gradually joined by non-credit cooperatives – consumer, traders', artisans', housing, and other cooperatives. Rural areas also benefited from this development, and various agricultural non-credit cooperatives established themselves alongside the credit cooperatives. These included warehouses, purchasing and selling, as well as processing cooperatives (in fact, they were industrial facilities organized as cooperatives, such as dairies, distilleries, chicory drying plants, and starch, fruit, and vegetable processing cooperatives), livestock, land reclamation, and other cooperatives. They played a key role in curbing/suppressing rural usury (credit cooperatives), stabilizing the food market, and linking rural production to higher-level markets (non-credit cooperatives). Rural cooperatives were a mass phenomenon with over 1.5 million members. They were a grassroots movement. Typically, only a minimum of cooperatives were based on joint production or joint work. On the contrary, a vast majority of them were de facto »service organizations« for the homesteads/households of individual members. They operated on the principles of voluntary membership and internal democracy. In most of them (especially the non-credit cooperatives), decision-making was not based on the principle of »one member = one vote«, but the strength of the vote was based on the number of shares held. However, the dominant influence of large shareholders on the running of cooperatives was usually effectively limited by the statutes. This was done in the form of a maximum number of votes per person.

8 This is one of the core theses in Burešová, The Collectivization, 636–41.

From the beginning of the 20th century, political aspects began to play a role in cooperatives alongside their traditional economic, social, and especially in Central Europe, nationalist roles. Political parties in the Bohemian Lands, especially the mass-based ones, expanded and strengthened their base of members, supporters, and, above all, potential voters by binding cooperatives to themselves. However, cooperatives also benefited from this development, gaining lobbying influence. The link was realized mainly through cooperative associations, of which several dozen existed in the interwar period.[9] The typical features of the interwar agricultural cooperatives were, therefore: 1. Mass membership – in 1937, these cooperatives (excluding the Schulze-Delitzsch cooperatives, which also undoubtedly included some rural farmers) had more than 1,270,000 members. The number of people »affected« can be estimated at almost 3.2 million, i.e., most of the rural population. 2. Great economic and financial strength – the assets of the cooperatives (in 1937, excluding cooperatives of the Schulze-Delitzsch type) amounted to approximately 7.7 billion crowns (almost 13% of the Gross National Income of Czechoslovakia).[10] 3. Extreme organizational fragmentation resulting from national and political rivalries.

During the Nazi occupation (March 1939–May 1945), agricultural cooperatives were severely restricted, but the economic essence of their activities was preserved. However, it was supplemented by the new roles that the cooperatives played in the Nazi-controlled economy in food production and supply. The influence of political parties (which had ceased to exist) was eliminated. The gradual process of reducing the organizational fragmentation of cooperatives, which had already begun in the so-called Second Republic (October 1938–March 1939), was completed in 1942. All agricultural cooperatives became compulsory members of the two top associations (one for Bohemia and one for Moravia), and the existing associations were liquidated.[11]

The post-war economic reconstruction of Czechoslovakia during the so-called Third Republic (May 1945–February 1948) took place in the midst of a highly intense political struggle. The political system of »limited democracy« allowed the existence of three socialist political parties (including the CPC) and only one non-socialist political party in the Bohemian Lands. This, together with the development of the international situation and the USSR's growing influence, led to an almost three-year clash between the two political camps. On one side, there was the CPC and its allies (especially the »left« part of Social Democracy

9 The linkages between cooperatives and politics were recently analyzed in Slavíček and Kubů, *Politika.*

10 Slavíček and Kubů, *Politika*, 57–75. *Historická statistická ročenka*, 831. For the formula used to calculate the ratio between the number of members and the number of people affected by cooperatives, see Slavíček, From Business, 427.

11 *Vládní nařízení č. 242/1942 Sb. z. a n.*

and the trade unions); their opponents were other political parties, which, however, were often loosing energy fighting among themselves.

The political system favored radical left-wing measures. At its core, it was a comprehensive nationalization of industry, trade, and other services, implemented in several phases. This consolidated the traditional influence of the Communists in the urban working class. However, under the postulate of the »union of the working class and the peasantry,« the CPC also needed to establish its influence in the countryside. This was a prerequisite for achieving the future goal of gaining power in the state. The primary means to that became the completion of the land reform (which had been carried out inconsistently in the interwar period) and particularly the so-called second land reform. It was carried out by the Ministry of Agriculture, headed by the communist Július Duriš. The essence of the reform was a small land allocation (8–13 ha) at a very low, even symbolic price. It was an act that went against the logic of modern large-scale agriculture. Land tenure was newly fragmented; agriculture became the domain of small producers. In economic terms, this negative development was a price to be paid for the political gains of the CPC. The latter achieved its goal of winning the countryside over to its side. This was demonstrated in the 1946 elections, when the CPC won 40.2% of the ballots in the Bohemian Lands,[12] and later during the Communist Party's seizure of power in February 1948. At the same time, however, the CPC perceived the economic reality of small-scale rural production as temporary. It was prepared to change it radically after seizing power, despite publicly denying this. In this sense, its actions after February 1948 were a clear repudiation not only of its previous promises but of the political and economic course it had pursued.

The development of agricultural cooperatives differed between the two branches. Credit cooperatives were somewhat stagnating after the slump during the Second World War. On the one hand, they continued to serve their members and were able to retain a significant number of them, even in new political, economic, and social conditions. On the other hand, during 1945–1948, their expansion was relatively slow. While more than 3,000 agricultural credit cooperatives with almost 670,000 members existed in December 1945, two years later, there were about 3,400 of them with approximately 770,000 members – significantly fewer than in 1937.[13] Credit cooperatives could hardly compete with nationalized

12 The other parties' results were following: National–socialist Party 23.7%, People's Party (catholic party) 20.2%, Social–democrats 15.6%. 0.4% of ballots were »empty« – *Statistická příručka Československé republiky 1948*, 105.

13 There were over 4,300 Raiffeisen cooperatives with more than 700,000 members in 1937, plus a significant, however not measurable, part of almost 1,000,000 members of Schulze–Delitzsch cooperatives were agricultural producers – Smrčka et al., *Vývoj*, 209; Slavíček and Kubů, *Politika*, 53, 57.

banks in the new financial system. They lacked both the resources to modernize and the political support to evolve further. The development pattern of non-credit agricultural cooperatives was different. They flourished significantly – from almost 3,000 cooperatives with nearly 640,000 members in 1945 to over 5,700 cooperatives with ca 860,000 members in 1947, vastly surpassing the pre-war numbers.[14]

THE FIRST PHASE OF COLLECTIVIZATION (1949–1953)

February 1948 symbolizes a turning point in Czechoslovak modern history – the establishment of the Communist Party dictatorship. It found its expression not only in the political sphere (the new constitution of May 9, 1948) and the »socialist legislation« that developed from it. It was also reflected in other spheres – the social and cultural ones, and very firmly in the economic sphere. A centrally planned economy was installed. The trend of suppressing the private sector (initiated by the massive nationalization of industrial facilities, banks, and other entities in October 1945) continued, either through the expropriation of smaller enterprises or their merger into communal enterprises. The fundamental issue seemed to be the application of this development in agriculture.

The postulates marking the future long-term direction of the economy of sovietized Czechoslovakia were laid down by the IXth Congress of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia in May 1949 in the document called the General Line of Socialist Construction. Its center of gravity laid in the so-called socialist industrialization and »building of socialism« in the countryside. The First Five-Year-Plan (1949–1953), inspired by Soviet models, was derived from the General Line as its medium-term specification. It represented an instrument for adapting the Czechoslovak economy to the needs of the Soviet Union (and the Eastern Bloc it was building). The establishment of the Council for Mutual Economic Assistance expressed this. The First Five-Year-Plan implemented a radical restructuring of the Czechoslovak economy. Its characteristic features were the hyper-growth of heavy industry and mining, and the neglect of agriculture, as well as the tertiary sector. A severe structural economic imbalance was born.

Already in the first months after February 1948, a fundamental departure from the agricultural policy of 1945–1948 (which was based on the principle of small-scale, privately owned smallholdings) began – albeit at a decent pace at first. The land newly acquired by the peasants as part of the second land reform

14 In 1937, more than 3,600 non–credit agricultural cooperatives had over 570,000 members – Slavíček and Kubů, *Politika*, 63–75; Smrčka et al., *Vývoj*, 209.

was to be »collectivized« (although this term had not been used yet). In March 1948, six agricultural laws were passed.[15] These measures allowed for the breaking up of larger private homesteads and forced land exchanges (which were disadvantageous to private peasants), but also promised optimistic outlooks of attainable agricultural credits and a flat agricultural tax. The National Insurance Act, which introduced universal sickness and pension insurance for virtually all citizens of the Czechoslovak Republic in May 1948, had a positive effect too (at least temporarily).[16]

After gaining power, the Communists shortly seemed to follow a specific Czechoslovak path to socialism, which would preserve a large share of small (less than 5 ha) and medium-sized (5–15 ha) private ownership in agriculture.[17] A significant impulse to abandon this strategy and follow the Soviet path instead was the increased pressure from Moscow, particularly the June 1948 Cominform resolution on Yugoslavia. This classified even small private property as »the germ of the future bourgeoisie,« i.e., the class enemy. At the end of the same month, the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia (CC CPC) set »the containment of capitalist elements in the countryside« as its primary objective.[18] A further sharpening followed in November 1948, when the CC CPC adopted the »Conclusions on the Further Path of Czechoslovak Agriculture,« which set the goal of »isolating the rural bourgeoisie«. This was achieved through higher (obligatory) supply, disadvantages associated with using agricultural equipment in the newly established machine and tractor stations (see below), and other administrative measures.[19]

The collectivization process was formally initiated in February 1949 with the enactment of Law No. 69/1949 on Unified Agricultural Cooperatives (UAC).[20] It decreed the merger of all existing agricultural cooperatives in individual municipalities into a single, universal cooperative (collective farm) per municipality, known as the UAC.[21] Until the merger, the existing cooperatives were limited to regular economic activities only. Their members automatically became members of the UAC upon the merger. If they did not want to become members, they had to officially (in a written form) resign within 14 days (although they did not

15 *Zákon č. 43/1948 Sb. Zákon č. 44/1948 Sb. Zákon č. 45/1948 Sb. Zákon č. 46/1948 Sb. Zákon č. 47/1948 Sb. Zákon č. 49/1948 Sb.*

16 *Zákon č. 99/1948 Sb.*

17 This was promised many times, the most famously in the speech of Klement Gottwald on February 28, 1948: »The who scare people with kolkhoses belong to subversives and saboteurs« – *Rudé právo*, March 2, 1948, 2, Klement Gottwald k rolníkům.

18 Pernes, *Velké dějiny*, 202.

19 Průcha et al., *Hospodářské a sociální dějiny*, 353. To the Specific Czechoslovakia's way to socialism as it is called and its abandoning, see also: Pernes, Specifická cesta.

20 *Zákon č. 69/1949 Sb.*

21 If only one agricultural cooperative existed in a village, it was transformed into a UAC.

apply to become UAC members at all). The assets and liabilities of the existing cooperatives were transferred to the UACs without liquidation, and the original cooperatives ceased to exist. The Ministry of Agriculture drew up a »model«, binding statutes for UACs. Although these did not prohibit the participation of »village wealthy« farmers in the UACs, they limited their influence in the executive body (board of directors) to a maximum of one-fifth. Similarly, the principle of »one member = one vote« was consistently enshrined, contradicting the previous common practice whereby voting in agricultural cooperatives was usually based on the number of shares owned.[22]

The law's wording did not imply that the UACs would be established based on the Soviet *kolkhozes* model. The essential difference was that the land remained legally in the hands of the original private owners, who (theoretically) regained the land if they withdrew from the UAC. In practice, this was more widely implemented only in the short »intermezzo« of 1953–1955 and then in the economic transformation after 1989. Although the law and the accompanying Ministerial Decree No. 75/1949[23] formally stated that the formation and entry into UACs were voluntary, the practice differed significantly. Members of the existing cooperatives had no alternative to membership in the UACs other than to resign officially. This form of resistance, however, already in early 1949 (and even more so later), required considerable courage, as it was associated with being labeled a *kulak* or an »enemy of the building of socialism« and thus with the risk of repression.

The methods of pressure on private farmers who refused to join the UACs were highly variable but complex and had an adverse synergistic effect. They ranged from political propaganda, persuasion by cooperative organizers, etc., through methods of economic pressure – progressively increased (and year by year increasing) obligatory amount of production, tax discrimination, disadvantages on the regulated market for food and consumer goods, unavailability of resources (seeds, fertilizers, machinery), exclusion of private farmers (as opposed to cooperative farmers) from national insurance, etc., up to methods of illegal coercion like blackmailing and intimidation or staged trials against »enemies of the building of socialism« – often with draconian punishments – to outright brachial violence, including physical liquidations. The culmination of the persecutory pressure was the »*Action Kulak*,« which took place in two waves between 1951 and 1953. During this time, families of the »village wealthy« farmers were forcibly evicted from their homes, their properties were confiscated, and families were not allowed to leave their newly designated residence. They were left with

22 Návrh stanov JZD, 72. Průcha et al., *Hospodářské a sociální dějiny,* 354–55.
23 *Nařízení ministra zemědělství č. 75/1949 Sb.*

minimal means of subsistence. More than 4,000 peasant families were evicted (and thus, an equal number of estates were broken up). The *kulaks* were also publicly (and falsely) blamed for severe difficulties in the food supply. This effectively copied the Soviet model used during the collectivization of agriculture in the USSR after 1928.[24]

During the collectivization, four types of UACs gradually emerged. In type 1, some seasonal work was performed collectively (including the joint use of machinery); however, each peasant harvested their own land. This was a form of »neighborhood help« during critical periods of urgent agricultural work, especially harvests. Type 2 was based on removing the bosks between individual properties and creating large cooperative fields. Members' remunerations were based on the size of their share, i.e., the size of their land joined in the UAC. Livestock production continued to be carried out individually. Already, in the first two types, there were attempts to sow nearby plots of land with the same crop to increase production efficiency.[25] Type 3 of UAC was characterized by common crop and livestock production. The members' remunerations were primarily based on the work done and partly (up to a maximum of 15%) on the size of land merged into UAC. In addition, the cooperative members were allowed to have »crofts« (small private plots attached to individual houses) of up to 0.5 ha, together with some livestock. Unlike in the USSR, however, income from »crofts« in Czechoslovakia never formed a key part of the income of peasant households. The last, type 4 of UAC introduced remuneration exclusively according to work done, expressed in so-called »work units«. These were paid in advance on an ongoing basis and supplemented by additional payments after the annual accounting. These were minimal or mostly zero in the 1950s, but from the 1960s onwards, and especially in the 1970s and 1980s, they formed a substantial part of the members' income. Although the four types of UACs existed side by side for a time, the first three were seen from the beginning as merely transitional (types 1 and 2 exclusively until 1951).[26]

24 Recently Blažek (ed.), *Akce »K«*.
25 The joint saw of the nearby plots was rational in essence. See Lacina, Hledání cest.
26 Průcha et al., *Hospodářské a sociální dějiny,* 359.

Table 1: Unified agricultural cooperatives in 1949–1953 (December 31)

Year	UACs	Agricultural Land (incl. »crofts«)	
		% of all	per UAC (ha)
1949	28	0.2	250
1950	1,389	9.7	321
1951	2,363	15.0	290
1952	4,157	26.0	287
1953	5,215	30.5	261
Year	Workers	Gross agricultural production (n/a for 1949–1952)	
		(% of total, without »crofts«)	Per ha (KČS, stable prices of 1980)
1953	.	23.0	6,692

Source: *Historická statistická ročenka*, 425, 507

The course of the collectivization of the countryside during the first Five-Year-Plan revealed many problems arising from the incompleteness of the whole concept. The owners of small, unproductive farms, often with less fertile land, were willing to join UACs. Unsuccessful farmers were also interested. On the other hand, the owners of more profitable farms generally resisted collectivization because they did not want to give up their land, often acquired under the so-called Second Land Reform (see above). This was even more true for medium-sized farmers. The traditional relationship of the farmer to the land cultivated for generations, as well as to his domestic animals, was not considered by the communist regime. This is why collectivization was more effortless in the border areas, where these traditional ties usually had no place. Most of the agricultural population there was newly settled on land expropriated from former German owners and often lacked the necessary professional skills.

Most cooperatives, not only in border areas, lacked professionally competent leadership. This was an even bigger problem after the former middle peasants, ideologically labeled as »former people,« were repulsed from the UACs' leadership in the early 1950s. Another problem was that, based on ideological and bureaucratic pressure, cooperatives were created »out of obligation« even when conditions were unsuitable. Very often, too-small cooperatives were formed that were primarily composed of peasants who could not compete. Subsidies to UACs were being wasted on a large scale, a fact that the leadership of the CPC was painfully aware of but tolerated because ideological intentions were given preference over economic considerations.[27]

A systemic problem was the general organization of agriculture, which essentially copied the Soviet model. In addition to UACs (similar to Soviet *kolkhozes*),

27 Pernes, *Velké dějiny,* 554.

state farms (Československé státní statky – Czechoslovak State Farms, CSFs) were established. These followed the Soviet sovkhozes as a model even more closely than the UACs. The land of CSFs was state-owned, and the workers were mere employees. The CSFs were mainly established in border areas with lower-grade land. Not enough people were interested in getting farms in these gradually settled territories, as the population density dropped significantly after the forced displacement of the original German population. However, state farms were also established in areas where traditional large-scale farms were already available (and had been expropriated), which the new regime decided to preserve due to their high economic efficiency. This was also one of the reasons for the higher success rate of the CSFs compared to the UACs in the first two decades of the new regime.

The establishment of Machine and Tractor Stations (Strojní a traktorové stanice, MTSs),[28] again following the Soviet model, proved to be another organizational blunder. They acquired agricultural equipment, often forcibly (and at unfavorably lower prices), bought from private owners. New machinery was only allowed to be supplied to the MTSs. With this equipment, they were to serve agricultural producers within the district. Although, in theory, the principle was formulated in such a way that this support should also be given to private small producers, in practice, it was mostly denied to them, and MTSs became one of the instruments of discrimination against private farmers, thus contributing to the pressure for their collectivization. However, the capacity of the MTSs proved insufficient; the system was over-bureaucratized and inefficient. At times of peak agricultural work, moving the equipment between the various cooperatives in the district posed a logistical problem and created considerable delays in its use.

The aforementioned interventions in agriculture resulted in chaos and, naturally, low efficiency, which did not meet the population's food needs. This was the logical outcome of the communist regime's overall systemic approach to the entire agricultural sector during the years of the First Five-Year-Plan. The »hyperindustrialization« allocated most of the investment resources to the secondary sector, mainly to the extensive construction of heavy industry. Agriculture was underinvested in. In addition, considerable labor was siphoned off from it. Purchasing prices of agricultural products that had to be sold to the state were set unreasonably low. All of this, together with the overall ideological class framing of collectivization, created the conditions for the disintegration of agricultural cooperatives, which reached the brink of collapse in early 1953.

28 *Zákon č. 27/1949 Sb. Nařízení vlády č. 83/1951 Sb.*

THE CRISIS INTERMEZZO (1953–1955)

The First Five-Year-Plan was very ambitious. Its goals of post-war economic renewal and quick industrial expansion were too high even in the original 1948 version. Moreover, it was revised, and its goals were significantly increased in 1951. By early 1953, it was obvious that the possibilities for extensive growth had almost been exhausted. Some industries (e.g., metallurgy, metal, and chemical) had met or exceeded the revised 1951 targets. However, most other industrial branches, as well as agriculture, lagged behind expectations (Table 2). Although the formal reason for collectivization was the implementation of modern, highly efficient forms of mass agriculture production, the growth was much slower than expected, and it did not reach the pre-war production level.[29]

Table 2: Major quantitative goals of the First Five-Year-Plan (indexed, 1948 = 100)

	Expected production in 1953, according to		Reality 1953
	1948 plan	1951 plan	
Gross national income	148	170	159
Industrial production	157	198	193
Agriculture	137	153	117
Plant production	111	142	115
Animal production	186	171	118

Source: Průcha et al., *Hospodářské a sociální dějiny*, 271

These results, combined with the uncertainty caused by the power shifts in the USSR after the death of J. V. Stalin (followed by the death of K. Gottwald in Czechoslovakia soon afterward), with an adverse, unexpectedly strong public reaction to the monetary reform[30] and the equally unexpected, violent riots in the GDR on June 17, 1953, led the Communist Party leadership to reconsider its existing economic policy. The main principles of the »New Course«[31] were a change in agricultural policy, the postponement of the Second Five-Year-Plan and its temporary replacement by the 1954 and 1955 annual plans, the transfer of significant investments from the productive to the consumer sphere, a reduction in military spending, and a partial return to capitalist international markets.[32]

The situation in agriculture was so unsustainable that a temporary suspension of collectivization took place at the beginning of 1953, even before the official

29 In fact, the pre–war level of agricultural production was not reached for 15–20 years in the Bohemian Lands – see the period of 1960–1975.

30 Jirásek and Šůla, *Velká peněžní loupež.* Petráš, Peněžní reforma 1953.

31 Unlike in the GDR, this term was, however, not officially used in Czechoslovakia.

32 Průcha et al., *Hospodářské a sociální dějiny,* 290–92.

start of the »New Course«.[33] In the following period, the pressure on private producers was substantially reduced, as indicated by President A. Zápotocký's speech at the Klíčava dam on August 1, 1953. He said, among other things: »Establishing cooperatives administratively, by order and perhaps by force, will not help. [...] Therefore, we must look into agricultural cooperatives.« He explicitly addressed people interested in leaving the UACs with the following words: »We will not prevent you from that.«[34] A large wave of departures from the UACs followed, and about 1,000 of them even broke up (in the whole of Czechoslovakia). The regime focused on supporting existing cooperatives and partially reassessed its agricultural policy. The existing state-organized purchase of all agricultural production at low prices was changed. The amounts of compulsory deliveries were reduced, and the purchase prices increased. Moreover, the production exceeding the compulsory deliveries was newly purchased at double the price. The state increased investment in agriculture, as well as subsidies to the UACs.[35] Therefore, the imminent breakdown of agriculture was avoided.

The two-year break of the »New Course« allowed the state apparatus to consolidate those cooperatives that could be sustained. At the same time, it bought time to revise procedures and activities where the existing strategy was failing. For private farmers, however, there was no room for joint action or significant improvement in their economic situation. A new phase of the collectivization process began in 1955.

THE SECOND PHASE OF COLLECTIVIZATION (1955–1960)

A political turning point in the development of Czechoslovakia's agriculture during this period was the CC CPC's meeting in June 1955. A more deliberate approach replaced the earlier certain spontaneity, or even chaos, in the building of cooperatives. Compared to the first stage, the principal change was a partial retreat from brutal forms of coercion. This was followed by more significant investment in agricultural production, an increase in mechanization, etc. The newly established UACs were larger (Table 3), which allowed for a more rational use of machinery and the introduction/expansion of large-scale production practices. More rational remuneration in UACs also played a role.[36]

Before the beginning of the Second Five-Year-Plan (1956–1960), the UACs farmed 36.6% of the agricultural land, and together with the state farms and

33 Ibid., 290.
34 *Rudé právo*, August 8, 1953, 1, Prezident republiky mezi budovateli Klíčavské přehrady.
35 Průcha et al., *Hospodářské a sociální dějiny,* 437–38.
36 Ibid., 426.

other enterprises, the »socialist sector« farmed 47%. Thus, more than half of the total agricultural land remained to be collectivized. It was notable that, in 1956, the UACs still had a relatively small proportion of medium-sized farms with an area of 5–15 ha.[37] In other words, the cooperatives still stood mainly on a group of small peasants or confiscated land.

The year 1957 marked a turning point in the development of socialist agricultural cooperatives, as 537 UACs with approximately 11,000 members were newly established. The average size of member farms in UACs grew to approximately 10 ha. This indicates a significant influx of members with larger land areas, substantially changing the balance of power between the cooperative and non-cooperative peasantry in the village.

During the last three years of the 1950s, a significant number of peasants, including those with medium-sized farms, entered the UACs. In 1960, cooperatives farmed 67.5% of the arable land and accounted for 60.3% of market agricultural production in Czechoslovakia.[38] In the Bohemian Lands, the figures were slightly higher (Table 3). Organizationally, it was an unprecedented success in collectivization for the CPC. It brought agriculture under control, both in terms of production and organization. And, to a large extent, also in terms of personnel (the chairman of the UAC was elected, but in the vast majority of cases, the Communist Party was able to promote/force its candidates).

Table 3: Unified agricultural cooperatives in 1955 and 1960

Year	UACs	Agricultural Land (incl. »crofts«)	
		% of all	per UAC (ha)
1955	5,309	20.3	227
1960	8,133	68.5	381
Year	Workers	Gross agricultural production	
		(% of total, without »crofts«)	Per ha (stable prices of 1980)
1955	222,547	21.1	8,798
1960	610,121	58.3	9,673

Source: *Historická statistická ročenka*, 425, 507

On the other hand, the second half of the 1950s was a failure regarding food security and the implementation of the Second Five-Year-Plan. Agriculture continued to lag far behind industry development. The rapid pace of development of the UACs was not matched by capital inflow, and in real terms, the level of mechanization was even declining. This was addressed by the XIth Congress of

37 *K dějinám*, 272.
38 Ibid., 274. *Historická statistická ročenka*, 225.

the Communist Party (June 1958), which imposed »to complete the socialization of the village and increase agricultural production« as the central task. At the end of 1958, an internal analysis of the top organs of the CPC concluded that the leading economic cause of the unsatisfactory results of agriculture was the lack of workforce and »little material interest of the UACs in the development of joint production« due to the poor system of purchase prices and the low level of mechanization.[39]

In 1959, a series of changes was introduced. Its goals were to make agricultural production more efficient, but – very importantly! – also to increase the incomes of agricultural cooperative members, so that they could catch up with the incomes of other professions. First, the purchasing prices were unified (i.e., the different purchasing prices of compulsory deliveries and production over the limits were canceled). The new level was 12–30% higher. The common machinery was transferred from the Machine and Tractor Stations into UACs (and CSFs as well), and their purchasing prices decreased. The agricultural tax increased (up to now, it was only 1.2%), but it was more differentiated according to natural conditions (above all, the quality of arable land).[40] The qualifications of both cooperative management and members/employees were improving. A new Law on UACs was adopted in 1959 (with the implementing Ministerial Decree the following year).[41] They introduced a new UAC activity. Cooperatives were allowed to carry out an »auxiliary production« in agriculture-related branches, for example, in food processing.[42] While it may appear only as a cosmetic measure at first glance, it paved the way for the future prosperity of UAC, especially in the 1970s and 1980s.

All the changes have not resulted in a drastic increase in agricultural production yet. However, the rural population's living standards were improving: while the incomes of UAC's members/employees were only 62% of the average in 1960 (following a drastic slump from 70% in 1955), by 1968, they had reached 85%. Consequently, the social recognition of the rural population increased, as did the social stability of the countryside.

The CPC declared the year 1960 to be a crucial milestone in the development of Czechoslovak society and the new regime. It stated that a »new social class of cooperative peasants« had been formed, and the political climate of the countryside had changed. From the ruling regime's perspective, collectivization was essentially complete. This was reflected in the wording of the new constitution's preamble in 1960: »Socialism has triumphed in our country! [...] While

39 *K dějinám*, 273–74.

40 Průcha et al., *Hospodářské a sociální dějiny,* 438–39.

41 *Zákon č. 49/1959 Sb. Vyhláška Ministerstva zemědělství, lesního a vodního hospodářství č. 144/1960 Sb.*

42 *Zákon č. 49/1959 Sb.,* § 14. *Ministerská vyhláška č. 144/1960 Sb.*

completing the socialist construction, we are proceeding towards the construction of an advanced socialist society and gathering strength for the transition to communism. [...] We are already practising the socialist principle: "From each according to his ability, each according to his work!"« [43] The name of the state was even changed from the Czechoslovak Republic to the Czechoslovak Socialist Republic.

In reality, however, the situation in agriculture was more complex. Firstly, collectivization was not fully completed – in the Tatra regions of Slovakia, it had not yet taken place at all (and was only quietly done in the 1970s). This was, however, marginal from the regime's point of view, as well as from the perspective of the majority of the population. More important were the persisting problems in agriculture in general and in the functioning of the UACs. However, the measures taken at the turn of the 1950s and 1960s began to bear fruit relatively quickly. This was already evident in the following period.

THE STABILIZATION OF COLLECTIVIZED AGRICULTURE (1960–1975)

The measures adopted by the ruling regime at the end of the 1950s and implemented in the following years began to manifest results relatively quickly in the early 1960s. Agriculture experienced an unprecedented increase in production, so the pre-war level was finally surpassed in market agricultural production in 1960 and gross agricultural output in 1968.[44]

During the 1960s and 1970s, several trends marked the development of UACs. First, their number was decreasing quite rapidly in two waves. Second, the UACs' share of arable land dropped slightly in the first half of the 1960s[45] and remained stable after that. Third, the number of workers was decreasing slowly but constantly. Finally, the level of gross agricultural production per hectar increased steadily. In other words, the UACs became larger (by merging small cooperatives) and simultaneously more efficient (in quantitative terms) despite a decreasing number of workers (Table 4). The labor shortage thesis of the previous period proved incorrect, as further mechanization and massive chemicalization (regardless of the environmental disaster it created) actually allowed for the additional release of workers into the industry.

43 Constitution of the Czechoslovak Socialist Republic, Preamble, art. I–II. In English in – *Constitution of the Czechoslovak Socialist Republic.*

44 Related to 1936 and in Bohemian Lands (in the whole Czechoslovakia, the process was a bit quicker) – *Historická statistická ročenka*, 495–96.

45 At the same time, however, the arable land of CSFs increased about the same amount. Some UACs with bad results were transformed into CSFs. It did not impact the share of private owners at all – ibid., 506.

Table 4: Unified agricultural cooperatives in 1960–1975 (December 31)

Year	UACs	Agricultural Land (incl. »crofts«)	
		% of all	per UAC (ha)
1960	8,133	68.5	381
1965	4,472	60.3	602
1970	4,298	60.2	619
1975	1,421	61.1	1,888
Year	Workers	Gross agricultural production	
		(% of total, without »crofts«)	Per ha (stable prices of 1980)
1960	610,121	58.3	9,673
1965	541,398	56.2	10,407
1970	503,722	55.4	12,812
1975	432,372	60.7	14,341

Source: *Historická statistická ročenka,* 425, 507

When the Third Five-Year-Plan collapsed in 1963, industrial production was affected. Agriculture, on the other hand, fulfilled its tasks. The standard of living of the rural population also rose relatively rapidly. Rural and urban living standards began to converge significantly. New »cadres« began to flow into the UACs, but they were no longer just CPC-trusted, but also possessed an increasingly high level of professional qualifications. The structure and organization of agricultural work also changed. During the 1960s and 1970s, the former »universal agricultural worker« gradually disappeared from the countryside, as most activities were already specialized (with the logical consequence of increasing labor productivity).

This development went hand in hand with an increase in the countryside's social and political stability. The satisfaction of the majority of the rural population with the existing regime increased to such an extent that the countryside remained almost unaffected by the events of the so-called Prague Spring in the late 1960s. While the reformist and democratizing changes were borne by the workers, the civil servants, and especially the intellectuals, the countryside proved virtually immune to them and, from the point of view of the »normalizing« Communist Party, remained the bearer of conservative-communist stability. In principle, it then moved smoothly into the »normalization« period, i.e., the return of Czechoslovak society under the tutelage of the conservative forces of the CPC, which once again submitted fully to Soviet influence.

The symbolic culmination of the period was the newly adopted Law on Agricultural Cooperatives of 1975, followed by the Government Regulation on

Model Statutes of UACs.[46] In most parts, they particularized the practice up to date. However, there were two major changes. First, members could become people who did not own any land. While the law of 1949 specified the membership for »agricultural producers« or »persons who could help to achieve the goals of the cooperative,« and the law of 1959 did not specify the membership at all, the new law opened the membership to »any citizen who has finished the compulsory education«.[47] Second, and more importantly, the »auxiliary production« could also be realized in non-agrarian branches of the economy, though the permission of the state authorities bound it.[48] Many UACs utilized this approach to establish thriving productions in the following years and achieved remarkable profits as a result. A door was open for a new, specific form of socialist enterprise.

From the ruling regime's perspective, the period from 1960 to 1975 was a notable success in agriculture. The problems that were beginning to appear on the horizon (see the next section) had been largely ignored so far; the Communist Party was slow and reluctant to acknowledge them. For the time being, it was lulled into a false sense of security by quantitative indicators showing the fulfillment of the five-year plans. Therefore, it looked forward to the next few years with optimism.

THE COLLECTIVIZED AGRICULTURE – A FACTOR IN THE STABILITY OF THE COMMUNIST REGIME (1975–1989)

The years 1975–1989 were the peak of socialist agriculture. On the one hand, it was experiencing unprecedented quantitative development, even a boom, while the economy as a whole was sinking into deep problems and de facto stagnating. Mechanization, specialization of production, and the qualifications of (not only) managers were increasing. The creation of so-called »agro-combines,« i.e., huge collective farms with many thousands of hectares of land and hundreds or thousands of workers, was also a symbol of change. They were formed by merging existing UACs and engaged in various activities beyond livestock and crop production. These activities ranged from processing agricultural production (e.g., slaughterhouses, dairies) to selling products, sometimes even on a wholesale basis.

46 *Zákon č. 122/1975 Sb. Nařízení vlády č. 137/1975 Sb.*
47 *Zákon č. 122/1975 Sb.*, § 15.
48 *Zákon č. 122/1975 Sb.*, § 13.

Table 5: Unified agricultural cooperatives in 1976–1988 (December 31)

Year	UACs	Agricultural Land (incl. »crofts«)	
		% of all	per UAC (ha)
1975	1,421	61.1	1,888
1981	1,072	61.8	2,480
1987	1,025[a]	.	2,578[a]
Year	Workers	Gross agricultural production	
		(% of total, without »crofts«)	Per ha (stable prices of 1980)
1975	432,372	60.7	14,341
1981	396,579	63.5	15,304
1987	405,900[b]	.	17,047[b]

[a] January 1, 1988; [b] January 1, 1987
Source: *Historická statistická ročenka,* 425, 507; Statistické přehledy, I, V

However, a crucial factor in the development of the UACs in this period was the dramatic increase in non-agricultural auxiliary production. In this context, many UACs (later called the »top« ones) established cooperation with industrial enterprises, to which they supplied components, at a significantly higher profit than the one achieved by agricultural production. In addition, UACs often produced final products that were not appealing to large industrial enterprises due to their small scale (such as, for example, cement bags). Some of these cooperatives even expanded into the tertiary sector.

A symbol of this trend was the mammoth »agro-combine« UAC Slušovice, whose evaluation from the point of view of economic history is still highly ambivalent. On the one hand, it was undoubtedly an extremely professionally managed enterprise that achieved phenomenal economic results. It expanded into a wide range of activities (production of tires, IT technology, etc.) and developed acquisitions even in socialist foreign countries, including Asia. On the other hand, however, it is necessary to consider that Slušovice was a company strongly preferred by the regime, its »showcase«. The cooperative had access to incomparably higher and more exclusive resources and could afford activities that other enterprises could not get away with.

It is symptomatic that the attitude of the ruling regime towards the »top« UACs was ambivalent. On the one hand, their prosperity and economic efficiency were appreciated, and the cooperatives were promoted in the media, etc. On the other hand, in the second half of the 1980s, the regime intended to significantly limit the profitability (and, therefore, »enrichment«) of the »top« UACs. It was planned to substantially increase (up to several times) taxation of profits from non-agricultural auxiliary production, i.e., the source of the extraordinary

prosperity of these large enterprises, which were in some cases de facto pseudo-agricultural already.[49]

For decades, the negative consequences of the rapid development of »socialist agriculture« were ignored. For example, the creation of vast cooperative fields contributed to soil depletion. Over-chemicalization (the reason for marvelous productivity per ha) contaminated the soil and water for many years, even decades. The concentration of livestock production was too high. It led not only to diseases spreading but also to a lack of feed, which had to be imported at a very high cost from capitalist countries. These problems became evident in the 1970s, and even more in the 1980s.

The epilogue of agricultural cooperative farming in communist Czechoslovakia was, in fact, the new Law on Agricultural Cooperative Farming (in force since July 1, 1988).[50] It loosened the grip of control of cooperatives by the Communist Party (although it did not remove it!) and greatly liberalized the principles of cooperative activities. The democracy of inner procedures increased in cooperatives. UACs were given considerably greater scope for autonomous business activities. In addition to primary agricultural production, they could also almost freely engage in manufacturing and services – in this sense, the law legitimized an already widespread trend. It also opened the way to direct economic relations with companies in foreign countries, including non-socialist ones. A major innovation was that UACs could claim compensation for injuries caused by interference by non-cooperative bodies. For the lagging cooperatives, it was bad news that reaching subsidies or rehabilitations was now more difficult. For the first time, the law made it obligatory for UACs to protect the environment and set aside funds for this purpose. All of this was an expression of the state's move away from cooperatives. Finally, the possibility of a member leaving the UAC re-entered public discourse. The law now, for the first time, explicitly mentioned that it was possible to leave a cooperative without giving any reason and request the return of the land, provided a one-year notice period was given.[51] All these rational changes, however, came too late. The end of Communist Czechoslovakia was already on the horizon.

49 Kopeček, Přední JZD, 108–10, 117–18.

50 *Zákon č. 90/1988 Sb.*

51 *Zákon č. 90/1988 Sb.* This did not materialize. The request could be made only at the end of any year after a one–year–long period of notice. Therefore, the first time this could have happened was December 31, 1989. At that time, the Communist regime in Czechoslovakia was already over.

CONCLUSION

Cooperatives, especially those in agriculture, have repeatedly played extremely important political roles in the 20th century. They were used (in the First Republic) or abused (in the Communist period) for political purposes. In the first phase of collectivization (1949–1953), the Unified Agricultural Cooperatives (UACs) became a field of organized, often ruthless violence with the assistance of the state authorities. The goal of the regime was the so-called »socialization of the village«, which denied traditional private ownership, reduced (or even eliminated) private ownership of land, and introduced the UAC system. These objectives remained in force during the following period, but were no longer implemented using the brutal methods employed previously. The ruling regime's approach became more sophisticated, its methods of coercion more subtle. The new approach ultimately yielded the desired results. In the second half of the 1950s, the Communist Party successfully collectivized a significant portion of the agricultural land and production.

From the late 1950s to the late 1980s, the Communist Party's approach to the countryside was consistent. It was characterized by increasing investment, financial measures to support the UACs (e.g., in the form of higher purchase prices), the gradual expansion of the UACs' business beyond purely agricultural activities (the so-called auxiliary production), the improvement of workers' qualifications, the expansion of mechanization and chemicization, etc. As a result, the rural population's standard of living increased and began to close in on that of the urban population during the 1960s. Subsequently, however, in the mid-1970s, this level was surpassed, and the higher rate of income growth was maintained until the end of the communist regime. This resulted, among other things, in increased building activity in the countryside, both public (shops, cultural centers, etc.) and private.

The social stability of the countryside was increasing, and it became one of the regime's mainstays. It is significant that agriculture as a whole – and agricultural cooperatives within it – were marginal issues in all four attempts at systemic economic reform (1958–1960, 1967–1968, 1978–1980, and since 1988). If, in the first case, the regime could not address this issue in any significant way (the so-called »Rozsypal« reform focused primarily, and almost exclusively, on industry), in all the other cases, this was because agricultural cooperatives were largely stabilized, fulfilled their stated tasks, and thus did not require significant changes in the regime's optics.

At first glance, it may seem that collectivization was entirely successful. In reality, however, the structural problems of the agricultural sector have been

growing all along. Although crop yields and labor productivity (as well as living standards) were rising, the long-term unsustainability and unreformability of the centrally planned economic system became increasingly obvious from the early 1980s at the latest. Agriculture was facing the limits of further development, and new problems were emerging (especially in livestock production). The gap between Czechoslovakia and the Western developed countries was widening. It was becoming more and more apparent that it would be impossible to maintain, let alone raise, the current standard of living in the long term, given the current state of the economy as a whole (and agriculture within it). Economic development was at an impasse. Social unrest and, logically, the following fall of the regime were to be expected.

In the long term, the farming methods implemented in socialist agriculture have led to very negative consequences, burdening the landscape and its inhabitants for generations. In the material sphere, the environment and the soil have been devastated. In the spiritual sphere, the paradigm in the relationship between the farmer and the land underwent a fundamental shift. The latter remained a means of production, but no longer the farmer's own, but a social one. Thus, the close relationship of human to the land was lost.

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Fruit growing and agricultural peasant working cooperative in Osojnik near Ptuj, Slovenia, field work, 1949

Photo: Jože Mally, courtesy of: Museum of Contemporary History of Slovenia.

RESISTANCE AND DYSFUNCTIONS

Lev Centrih

The Demise of Collectivization in Slovenia: A Case Study of the Area around the Settlement Ig near Ljubljana in 1952

INTRODUCTION

In this article, I will demonstrate the demise of collectivization in Slovenia through the analysis of a single case, specifically the rural area around the settlement of Ig near Ljubljana, in the spring of 1952.* At that time, peasants across Slovenia began to withdraw en masse from peasant labour cooperatives (*kmečke delovne zadruge*, KDZs) – the Slovenian-Yugoslav counterparts to the Soviet *kolkhozes*. Unlike their Soviet counterparts, however, Slovenian peasants overwhelmingly retained ownership of their land while being members of KDZs –

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a distinction that proved crucial. According to the law, peasants were permitted to leave cooperatives only after three years of membership.[1] Since most peasants had joined in 1949, the mass departures from cooperatives in 1952 indicate that they seized the first opportunity to leave. Collectivization in Slovenia reached its peak in 1951, when 381 KDZs were established. According to Zdenko Čepič, only around 5% of the peasant population in Slovenia in 1952 were members of KDZs. According to Melissa K. Bokovoy, 10.7% of all arable land in Slovenia in 1951 was used by KDZs. This suggests that the extent of collectivization in Slovenia was relatively low, especially when compared to the Yugoslav average: 23.6% of all arable land was under KDZs according to Bokovoy in 1951, and 18.48% according to Dragan Veselinov in 1952.[2] By the end of 1951, collectivization had stalled not only in Slovenia but across Yugoslavia. Due to peasant resistance, the reluctance of local authorities, and the underwhelming performance of the KDZs, the Yugoslav authorities initiated the first reorganisation of the cooperatives. This reorganization already anticipated the closure of unproductive KDZs – a move that effectively marked the beginning of the end of collectivization.[3] By 1954, only 43 KDZs had survived in Slovenia; moreover, the majority of those remaining were dissolved the following year as well.[4]

Collectivization in the Ig area was carried out in a community heavily burdened by the war. During the Second World War, the vicinity of this area was the scene of ruthless military conflict not only between the partisans and Italian/German occupiers but particularly between the partisans and their domestic armed adversaries. The war took an enormous toll in human lives and brought economic devastation. The Ig area was, after 1945, administratively part of the Territory of Ljubljana – Outskirts (*Okraj Ljubljana – okolica*, OLO), which had a population of 61,782 residents in 1948.[5] In the early post-war years, territories in Slovenia and Yugoslavia were governed by people's committees (*ljudski odbori*), which acted as authorities over broader areas encompassing multiple settlements and villages. Below them, individual settlements had their own Local

1 *Uradni list FLRJ*, No. 49, 1949, 713, Art. 30, Temeljni zakon o kmetijskih zadrugah.

2 Čepič, Kolektivizacija, 938. Bokovoy, *Peasants,* 147–48. Veselinov, *Sumrak*, 37. Cf. Čeferin, Kotarski poslovni savezi, 1188. In fact, Bokovoy most likely refers to the total available agricultural land, including forests, meadows, and pastures. The *Yugoslav Cooperative Encyclopedia* (1957) reports a very similar total area of land available to KDZs in 1951 – 76,796 hectares – compared to Bokovoy's figure of 79,478 hectares. However, the *Encyclopedia* does not define this as arable land but more broadly as the »total area« (*ukupne površine*). Interestingly, the *Encyclopedia* also notes that Slovenian cooperative members contributed only 52,902 hectares of land to the KDZs, meaning that the remaining land was most likely provided by the Land Fund (*Zemljiški sklad*), which administered nationalized land resulting from the agrarian reform in Slovenia. For a more detailed explanation of this issue, see note 46 in this text.

3 Bokovoy, *Peasants*, 149–52.

4 Čeferin, Kotarski poslovni savezi, 1188. Čepič, Oris, 183–85.

5 *FNRJ. Konačni rezultat popisa stanovništva od 15 marta 1948, Vol. 1*, 263.

People's Committees (*krajevni ljudski odbori*, KLOs); for example, the settlement of Ig had its own KLO. A 1952 reform initiated the process of abolishing KLOs and merging settlements into municipalities (občine), with Ig designated as the planned administrative center of the new municipality. Various political organizations existed at all levels of local government – including the Liberation Front (*Osvobodilna fronta*, OF), the Antifascist Women's Front (*Antifašistična fronta žensk*), the People's Youth of Slovenia (*Ljudska mladina Slovenije*), and the Union of the Fighters (*Zveza borcev*) – all under the dominant influence of the Communist Party of Slovenia (*Komunistična partija Slovenije*, KPS), whose control extended deeply into local governance as well as into enterprises and KDZs. At the local level (KLO, municipality), membership across these structures – political and economic – often overlapped, further reinforcing the Party's authority.

Although the area of Ig had a relatively small population (3,442 in 1953)[6], as many as five KDZs were operating here by the spring of 1952. For comparison, there were only 15 KDZs in the entire Territory of Ljubljana – Outskirts in 1950.[7] Nevertheless, these KDZs had vanished by 1953. The 1953 census indicates that only one individual in the whole Ig municipality was recorded as a member of a KDZ.[8]

Ig and its surroundings during the war and the early years that followed have already been the subject of historical research. Using a microhistorical approach, Ferdo Gestrin thoroughly elaborated on wartime events and the roles of various groups and individuals. The appendices to Gestrin's work are particularly valuable for the present study, as they contain extensive lists organized by individual settlements in the Ig area, with brief biographical notes on OF activists, partisan fighters, internees, members of Anti-Communist Militia , and Home Guard units who were active between 1941 and 1945. These lists also include the names of victims. Gestrin compiled this information using archival sources, data preserved in the 1980s by local socio-political organizations, and oral testimonies.[9] Since several individuals from Gestrin's lists and descriptions of wartime events in the main body of his book also appear in the documents consulted in the course of this research, it is possible – at least to some extent – to reconstruct the wartime and immediate postwar trajectories of certain key local figures. Naturally, this must be done with great caution. In small village communities, it is not uncommon for multiple people to share the same name and surname. Postwar documents, however, do not always contain sufficient identifying information to

6 *FNRJ. Popis stanovništva 1953, Vol. XIV*, 325.
7 Čepič, Oris pojavnih oblik kmetijski politike v letih 1945–1960, 185.
8 *FNRJ. Popis stanovništva 1953, Vol. XII*, 489.
9 Gestrin, *Svet*, 143–202. A more recent study on the same topic, albeit with a focus on the violence perpetrated by the quisling forces: Piškurić, Prispevek.

determine with complete certainty whether a particular individual corresponds to the one listed by Gestrin.

In her monograph, largely based on oral sources, Jelka Piškurić presents an in-depth portrayal of daily life in and around Ljubljana during the socialist era. At the same time, in one of her articles, she provides a detailed examination of the economic, political, and everyday life in Ig from 1945 to 1952. Since the thematic scope of her research is broader, Piškurić understandably dedicates very little space to the topic of collectivization. Piškurić wrote more about local cooperatives in the areas of trade, craftsmanship, and post-war reconstruction.[10]

Collectivization in the Ig area during the early post-war period was partially addressed in the monograph by Lev Centrih and Polona Sitar from the perspective of the integrated peasant economy. A more comprehensive depiction of collectivization in Slovenia can be found in the works of historians Zdenko Čepič, Mateja Čoh Kladnik, Žarko Lazarević, Marta Rendla, and Janja Sedlaček.[11]

In this article, I will analyze the decline of collectivization in the Ig area, particularly based on two documents: 1. Report on the Extraordinary Review of the KDZ »Ljubo Šercer« Brest (November 12–14, 1951). 2. Political and Economic Analysis of the Ig Local People›s Committee Area near Ljubljana (April 20, 1952). The first report, written by OLO representatives at the request of the Executive Committee of the OLO, spans 20 pages and describes in detail the collapsing KDZ in Brest, a village near Ig, focusing on the poor relations between cooperative members and the resilience of private family farming within the collective agricultural enterprise.[12] The second, around 100-page report was submitted by the members of the Party Revision Commission at the request of the Territorial Committee of the Communist Party of Slovenia, OLO. This report comprises 22 appendices, which include reviews of individual economic organizations and statements from various individuals. The Commission had planned as many as 27 meetings with different local stakeholders, including members of basic party organizations (*osnovne partijske organizacije*, OPO), boards of agricultural cooperatives, and local people's committees.[13] As Piškurić concludes that the archival materials of the socio-political organizations in Ig, such as the KPS, the Antifascist Women's Front, the People's Youth of Slovenia, and the Union of Fighters, for the period 1945–1952, have actually not been preserved, rich document »Political

10 Piškurić, »*Bili nekoč so lepi časi.*«, 60–61. Piškurić, Ig, 317.

11 Centrih and Sitar, *Pol kmet*, 108–19. Čepič, Oris, 182–87. Čoh Kladnik, *Kulaški procesi*. Lazarević, Rendla, and Sedlaček, *Zgodovina*, 165–77.

12 SI ZAL LJU 31/9, box 106, fol. 213, Poročilo o izrednem pregledu Kmetijske delovne zadruga »Ljubo Šercer« Brest, November 12–14, 1951.

13 SI ZAL LJU 31/9, box 28, fol. 40, Politična in gospodarska analiza področja KLO Ig pri Ljubljani, April 20, 1952. Since the report comprises several separate documents, I am citing only the titles of the latter. However, some of these documents are neither paginated, dated, nor have proper titles – in such cases, I am citing the first line of the document, which meaningfully summarizes its content.

and Economic Analysis« at least partly fills this void.[14] The Commission, which submitted this report, conducted interviews with the most relevant local KPS members, thereby providing a colourful picture of the political life in the area. Regarding my topic, the document also offers valuable reports about all five KDZs in the area.

The process of dismantling collectivization in Slovenia between 1951 and 1952 was marked by the authorities permitting peasants to withdraw from KDZs, as these proved less profitable than the private sector.[15] Collectivization was fading, yet a coherent framework for a new socialist agricultural policy had not yet been formulated. The Party still held political power, but it had yet to determine the precise direction in which to channel it. The case of Ig demonstrates this, as the Party's Revision Commission conducted investigations not only within local Party organizations but also in civil authorities, enterprises, KDZs, and cooperatives, doing so seamlessly and as a matter of course. However, it was equally incapable of providing explanations for the numerous issues it encountered, let alone proposing tangible solutions. At the outset of collectivization, the Party anticipated the most serious resistance from the »capitalist, exploitative elements« in the countryside, popularly labelled as *kulaks*.[16] However, by its end, at least in Ig, it encountered yet another unlikely adversary – one emerging from within its ranks, consisting of active Party members, war veterans, and local officials serving in government bodies, cooperatives, enterprises, and collective farms, who were deeply divided among themselves. In her study of Yugoslav collectivization and its failure, focusing mainly on Serbia and Croatia, Bokovoy outlined the resistance of lower-level Party cadres.[17] The case of Ig confirms that local, unreliable Party cadres had played a pivotal role in collectivization. Still, it also suggests that the dysfunctional performance of the latter was, in many cases, based on the interpersonal brawls between partisan veterans, as well as on their dissatisfaction and resentment for reasons often well beyond collectivization itself. More specifically, collectivization, in which war veterans were obliged to participate, further deepened and intensified their mutual conflicts.

In the first section, I will analyze the economic and political issues in the Ig area at the end of collectivization, considering the various conflicts between officials in local governance and enterprises, as well as rank-and-file Party members. In the second section, I will analyse the issues faced by the KDZs in the Ig municipality. A conclusion follows.

14 Piškurić, Ig, 310.
15 Čepič, Oris, 187. Čeferin, Kotarski poslovni savezi, 1188.
16 Resolucija o osnovnih nalogah partije na področju socialistične preobrazbe vasi in pospeševanja kmetijske proizvodnje, in: Čoh Kladnik, *Kulaški procesi*, 115.
17 Bokovoy, *Peasants*, 126–34. Bokovoy, Collectivization, 296–97, 310–11.

CONFLICTS IN THE IG AREA

In the spring of 1952, the secretary[18] of the municipal committee of the KPS Ig found himself in despair. According to his testimony, the situation was hopeless; neither he nor the committee was able to manage it. The problems had accumulated to such an extent that he lacked both the strength and the time to address them. »A member of the Communist Party in Ig can succeed only if he is a hypocrite.« It was not slander; this was a position openly presented to the Commission by prominent members of the KLO Ig, led by its president, Janez. Moreover, even the Party secretary himself agreed with this stance.[19] What was going on?

In 1952, the KPS Ig municipal committee oversaw several basic Party organizations encompassing members from the surrounding villages, enterprises, and KDZs. These included Ig, the Ig Teritorial Metal Company (*Okrajno kovinsko podjetje Ig*), Iška vas and KDZ, Tomišelj and KDZ, Golo and KDZ, Škrilje, Zapotok – Vidno and KDZ, and Želimlje. At that time, local people's committees, as administrative bodies of smaller areas, were being dissolved. The mentioned villages (along with several others) were in the process of merging into a single municipality, with its seat in Ig. Regrettably, the Party commission did not provide a detailed overview of KPS membership by locality and work organizations. However, some of the available data indicate that the numbers of Party members were, at least in some areas, far from negligible. A particularly notable example is the village of Zapotok, with 82 inhabitants, of whom approximately 35 were reported to be members of the Party. The village of Golo, with 153 inhabitants, had more than a respectable 30 Party members, while village Škrilje, with 145 inhabitants, had 16 Party members. In contrast, Ig, with a population of 807, had only a modest 38 Party members. However, Ig boasted nearly 300 members of the Liberation Front, the mass organization established in 1941 to fight against the occupiers. Among the 38 employees at the Ig Teritorial Metal Industry, 9 were Party members. We do not have precise data on how many members of the KDZs were communists. Still, the numbers mentioned above, as well as the Report, indicate that all local KDZs, at least for a time, certainly had Party members, particularly the KDZs in Iška vas and Zapotok. It is also evident from the report that, besides Ig, even smaller villages, such as Golo, Iška vas, Zapotok, and Brest, had their local socio-political organisations, including OF, the People's Youth of Slovenia, and the Union of Fighters. For example, the village of Golo had 39 OF

18 In this article, to ensure protection of personal data, all names and surnames of individuals mentioned in the cited documents have either been omitted or altered.

19 SI ZAL LJU 31/9, box 28, fol. 40, Partijski sestav Občinskega komiteta Ig, 2; Nekatere značilne izjave članov KP na Igu in Iški vasi.

members in 1952 (down from 78), and village Brest, with 214 inhabitants in 1953, had eight active members of the People's Youth of Slovenia; this number had significantly dropped since 1948, when they claimed as many as 30 members.[20]

A significant portion of the membership in the mentioned socio-political organizations predictably consisted of red partisan veterans and activists, both male and female, who had been actively involved already during the war. Throughout 1941–1945, Ig and its surrounding area belonged to the so-called Ljubljana Province (*Provincia di Lubiana, Ljubljanska pokrajina*), which experienced the highest population loss of all the regions in Slovenia – 9.6%, compared to a national average of 6.7%.[21] The Ig area suffered particularly severely. According to the 1948 population census, the ratio of men to women (in numbers) in selected villages was as follows: Škrilje (65:97), Zapotok (27:56), Ig (310:369), Iška vas (90:142), Brest (87:95), Tomišelj (86:132), Vrbljene (82:114), Želimlje (92:141), (Dolenje/Gorenje) Golo (63: 78).[22]

The course of wartime events in the Ig area largely reflected the complex circumstances prevailing in the Ljubljana Province at the time. The National Liberation Movement, led by the Communists, engaged in a struggle not only against the Italian occupiers but also against groups and individuals who, before the war, were predominantly aligned with the Catholic right. Compared to the German occupation of Styria (eastern part of Slovenia), they viewed the Italian annexation of the Ljubljana Province as the lesser evil. Considering the armed resistance, which, due to the leading role of the Communists, was seen as part of a path toward a socialist revolution, a significant portion of the former Catholic political establishment considered collaboration with the occupiers to be a completely acceptable option. The conflict between the two sides finally erupted in the broader Ig area between spring and autumn 1942. When the red partisan army briefly liberated the Ig area in late spring of 1942, expanded the activities of the OF, and gained a significant number of local supporters, it did not limit itself to executing only actual collaborators with the occupiers and political adversaries, but also targeted completely innocent people, even women and children, including entire families of the local Roma community. In the summer, the Italian army struck at the partisans, but the greatest victims were among the civilian population. Numerous houses were burned and looted by the Italians, many were killed, and many more were deported to concentration camps. From Ig alone, 152

20 SI ZAL LJU 31/9, box 28, fol. 40, Partijski sestav Občinskega komiteta na Igu; Poročilo o pregledu KOZ Golo, April 4 and 5, 1952; Poročilo o pregledu članstva KP v OPO Ig, April 9, 1952; Ig, 2; Politična analiza Okrajne kovinske industrije na Igu, April 5, 1952, 1; Sedaj vključeni v OPO Škrilje, April 10, 1952, 3; Brest.

21 Čepič, Guštin, and Troha, *Slovenija*, 425–37.

22 *FNRJ. Konačni rezultat popisa stanovništva od 15 marta 1948, Vol. 1,* 264–67.

people were taken, including those from the wider area, for a total of 726. From the autumn of 1942 onwards, the anti-partisan side began to organize militarily in Ljubljana Province. Under the patronage of the Italians, it was first formed into the Volunteer Anti-Communist Militia (*Milizia Volontaria Anti Comunista*). From the autumn of 1943, under the supreme command of the German SS police, it became the Slovenian Home Guard (*Slowenische Landwehr, Slovensko domobranstvo*). The National Liberation Movement labelled both as White – Guardism (*belogardizem*). The villages in the Ig area were subsequently divided into two factions: red and white. For example, the settlement of Ig provided 97 partisans, but also 68 Anti-Communist Militia members or Home Guards. German and Home Guard offensives, which included death squads that, from late autumn 1943 to the summer of 1944, executed dozens of partisan family members and activists of the National Liberation Movement, effectively dismantled the OF in the lowland villages around Ig by the end of the war. Everything suggests that the OF was only able to survive in the hillside villages of Golo and Škrilje. However, as the war was drawing to a close in the spring of 1945, the situation changed dramatically. Around 170 civilians from the villages in the Ig area fled from the new authorities. Those Home Guards who were unable to escape abroad were mostly executed.[23] In the KLO Ig area, the authorities immediately after the war confiscated the property of 30 individuals, 13 of whom had all their property seized. These individuals were identified as members of quisling formations or their sympathizers.[24]

After the war, the new revolutionary authorities were compelled to rebuild almost entirely the socio-political organizations (KPS, OF, etc.) that served as the foundation of their power from scratch. According to the report, they were successful on that matter, at least in appearance. According to Piškurić's research, the new post-war authorities in Ig also achieved some success in the fields of economy and public utilities. Ig, for example, acquired an industrial enterprise (Territorial Metal Industry Ig, Okrajna kovinska industrija Ig) in 1948, which had developed from a nationalized locksmith workshop. However, it struggled with low productivity and a shortage of necessary materials. Similarly, already in the early postwar years, Ig also had an agricultural cooperative store (for the purchase and sale of goods), a repair cooperative, a cinema, and even a doctor and a nurse.[25] As we have seen, even collectivization in the Ig area progressed relatively well. The proximity to Ljubljana provided the residents with additional employment and other opportunities.

23 Gestrin, *Svet*, 61–77, 127, 141, 186–94, 202. Piškurić, Prispevek.
24 Piškurić, Ig, 312.
25 Ibidem, 310, 317–20.

A brief overview of the political and economic developments in Ig gives the impression that, despite the ongoing severe shortages and general hardships, life has begun to normalize gradually, as the revolutionary authorities had hoped. In fact, it has not. The situation was far from normal, as these new institutions, enterprises/cooperatives, KDZs, and socio-political associations became battlegrounds between different individuals and cliques.

Testimonies recorded by the Party Revision Commission from several Party members indicate that a significant internal conflict had emerged within the municipal Party committee of the Ig during that period. The secretary of the committee began his political life in the spring of 1942 as a fighter in the 5th Partisan Battalion of the Notranjska Detachment (*Notranjski odred*).[26] In 1952, he was also the director of the Territorial Metal Industry Ig. He allegedly lobbied – despite the municipal Party committee's opposition – for a peasant with 12 ha of land, with whom he was connected, to be granted a concession for the local inn. According to the same testimonies, the secretary naturally denied the accusations and shifted the blame to the corrupt practices of others within the company. During the committee meeting, he was also once criticized for the fact that his wife, who had formerly been a good Party member, was now teaching children catechism. A serious accusation in those days. On top of that, it was reportedly common knowledge among Party members that their secretary was having an affair with a woman employed at the company. Regardless of the validity of these claims, it is undeniable that the Party secretary's authority was next to zero.[27]

Nevertheless, the Commission recorded by far the most criticism and complaints against the president of KLO Ig, Janez, who apparently had started his political career as an OF supporter as early as 1941, rather than as a partisan fighter in the Šercer brigade, and had achieved the rank of lieutenant.[28] Most of what was said about him came from numerous witnesses from Ig and Iška vas, and prompts the question: what, if anything, did he do right during his time as president of KLO Ig? When the parish land was partially expropriated, it is said that Janez, along with the president of the Agricultural Cooperative, and the secretary of KLO Ig benefited from it. Some people criticized Janez for being the initiator of the KDZ in Iška vas, only to lose interest and neglect it entirely. According to one account, Janez from the »Territoy« (likely the Territorial Party Committee) brought an instruction that all former partisan fighters had to join the KDZ, which they subsequently did. Later, he allegedly received agricultural goods from the KDZ, for which he reportedly owed 12,000 dinars, all while continuing to

26 Gestrin, *Svet*, 62.
27 SI ZAL LJU 31/9, box 28, fol. 40, Nekatere značilne izjave članov KP na Igu in Iški vasi.
28 Gestrin, *Svet*, 58, 149, 162.

receive food ration cards. Additionally, he was accused in one instance of unfair tax calculations, appropriating construction materials meant for the cooperative home in Iška vas, and withholding part of the payment for a cow from a peasant during a compensation process for mandatory procurement. It is essential to note that the last accusation originated from the Party Secretary. However, the most serious accusation against Janez, the president of KLO, was related to the arrest of three KDZ members from Iška vas in 1950. Among the locals, there was a strong belief that Janez was responsible for this, as the arrests occurred shortly after he had been criticized for doing nothing for the KDZ. One of those arrested at the time was also his predecessor as president of KLO Ig and a Party member, who was accused on that occasion of being a Cominform sympathiser.[29] At the time, this was a grave accusation. Only two years had passed since the Yugoslav Party's conflict with the Cominform, and many alleged – as well as genuine – sympathizers of Stalin's line within international communism faced not only expulsions from the Party, but also full-scale political persecution, including internment.[30]

According to one communist from Iška vas, the local Party was »only concerned with who would be taxed more, and there wasn't a single pair of members in the village who could stick together, as the division was so deep that no one could reconcile it. « Another villager remarked, »The Whites (*beli, belogardisti*) stand firmly together, whereas the partisans are so consumed by hatred that they would claw each other's eyes out.«[31] It is unclear whom the speaker was specifically referring to in this instance. Gestrin's research reveals that very few former Anti-Communist Militia or Home Guard members returned home unless they ultimately joined the partisans.[32] For the most part, they were either executed after the war, fled abroad, or their fate remains unknown. The Commission's report explicitly mentions only one »White Guardist« (*BE-ga*) who returned after seven years of forced labour and declared his intent for revenge. (His name is missing in Gastrin's list of Anti-Communist Militia members and Home Guards in the area.)[33] Partisan veterans also counted the priest from Ig among the organizers of the White Guard, and it appears they extended this label to the remaining relatives of Home Guard members as well.

At this point, two preliminary conclusions are possible. First, the relations between the KLO as the administrative apparatus and the local Party organization, the bearer of political power, were very poor. Second, regardless of the

29 SI ZAL LJU 31/9, box 28, fol. 40, Nekatere značilne izjave članov KP na Igu in Iški vasi; KDZ Iška Vas – Poročila o izjavah članov.

30 Banac, *With Stalin*, 145–220.

31 SI ZAL, LJU 31/9, fasc. 28, fol. 40, Nekatere značilne izjave članov KP na Igu in Iški vasi; KDZ Iška Vas – Poročila o izjavah članov Iška vas.

32 Gestrin, *Svet*, 186–94.

33 SI ZAL LJU 31/9, box 28, fol. 40, Nekatere značilne izjave članov KP na Igu in Iški vasi.

truth of the accusations, there is a strong likelihood that Janez, the president of KLO, was a much more influential figure than the local Party secretary. While the questionable actions of the Party secretary are mainly discussed in relation to the Territorial Metal Industry Ig, the name of the president of KLO surfaces in nearly all other scandals. In addition, Janez certainly had connections with higher authorities at the OLO level.

It is necessary to mention other conflicts that were taking place in the area around Ig at the time. The members of the Union of the Fighters in Ig complained that the Agricultural Cooperative did not distribute goods fairly. (The irregularities in the cooperative's operations were also confirmed by the Commission.) In the village organization of the Zapotok Union of Fighters, for example, there were disputes over the question of who (does not) deserves the status of the holder of the prestigious Commemorative Medal of the Partisans of 1941. (Disputes over this issue were also taking place elsewhere at the time.) Furthermore, the communists from the villages of Visoko and Zapotok had a falling out and established separate OPOs. According to the testimony of a member of the Party from Visoko, the members of the Zapotok OPO allegedly argued at Party meetings mainly over who would receive financial resources and materials, most likely for the reconstruction of homesteads.[34] The villagers of Golo are said to have opposed their annexation to the municipality of Ig because they had heard rumours that they would be taxed more heavily. In addition, despite having 30 organized communists, the village of Golo did not have a Party secretary, and the cell meetings had not been organized for over a year. According to the president of the local OF and a member of the Party, the villagers of Golo were allegedly promised that the village would be electrified if they participated in the elections to the People's Assembly of the People's Republic of Slovenia (*Ljudska skupščina Ljudske republike Slovenije, LRS*). The promise was later not fulfilled. It appears that a significant amount of discontent was caused by the distribution of cement, which was not made available to everyone at the same price. A local curiosity was undoubtedly the former president of the KLO of Golo, a landowner with 19ha, allegedly a church loyalist (*klerikalec*) before the war, an OF activist since 1942, who was expelled from the Party in 1950 for unlawfully appropriating food ration cards and industrial coupons. During his tenure as president of the KLO, he failed to fulfill his obligations regarding the mandatory delivery of agricultural produce. Despite his expulsion, he refused to return his Party membership card until he received an official certificate of exclusion.[35]

34 Ibid., (Statements by Party members) Visoko; Nekatere značilne izjave članov KP na Igu in Iški vasi; KDZ Zapotok, 2.

35 Ibid., (Statements by individuals, undated) Golo; (Statements by individuals) Golo, April 10, 1952, 2.

DEADLOCK IN COLLECTIVIZATION IN THE IG AREA

The agrarian reform of 1945–1947 did not radically transform the ownership structure of landholdings in Slovenia. Only about one fifth of Slovenia's prewar land area actually changed ownership as a result of the reform. As Zdenko Čepič has noted, the agrarian reform simultaneously pursued social as well as national objectives. On the one hand, it sought to abolish the exploitative character of private landownership, while on the other, it aimed to eliminate foreign ownership (particularly that of Germans) and to punish collaborators with the occupying forces. At no point, however, was the abolition of private landownership as such envisaged. To be sure, among those dispossessed the majority were landowners for whom farming did not constitute their primary occupation; nevertheless, their share of all confiscated land in Slovenia was marginal (only 5%). In terms of the extent of land lost, the greatest losers of the agrarian reform were non-Slovenes, large estate owners (holding more than 45 ha of land), and the Catholic Church. By contrast, Slovenian peasants who cultivated their land independently, but who exceeded the landholding maximum – set at between 20 and 35 ha of arable land and 10 to 25 ha of forest, amounting in total to 45 ha of land – represented only a negligible share among the dispossessed. Their portion of all confiscated land under the agrarian reform amounted to a mere 1.5%. The largest share of all confiscated land in Slovenia, however, consisted of forests (60%).The share of privately owned land in Slovenia for the year 1949 is estimated to have been 82% or more specifically, 93% of all arable land. At that time, the state was a significant owner of forests, with a 28% ownership share in 1948.[36]

The structure of land ownership in the Territory of Ljubljana – Outskirts in 1948, before the start of collectivization, significantly deviated from the Slovenian average. While in Slovenia at that time, approximately 43% of all peasant households comprised land of up to 5 hectares, and 23% ranged between 5 and 10 ha. In the OLO Ljubljana – Outskirts, only about 25% fell into the former category, and 23% into the latter. In comparison, as many as 52% of all peasant households exceeded 10 ha in size.[37] Although I do not have specific data on land holdings in the municipality of Ig, the key documents for this study from 1951/52 frequently mention the presence and role of well-off peasants in the area. The Commission's report, for instance, mentions several estates in the village of Zapotok, which were said to cover between 20 and 30 ha of land. However, these estates were reportedly managed by the widows of fallen partisans or hostages – individuals whom the occupiers had killed in retaliation for partisan actions. These estates

36 Čepič, *Agrarna reforma*, 81–88, 111–38, 245, 248. *Uradni list SNOS in NVS*, No. 62, 1945, Zakon o agrarni reformi in kolonizaciji v Sloveniji.

37 *FNRJ. Konačni rezultat popisa stanovništva od 15 marta 1948, Vol. X*, *XLI*, 137.

were either poorly cultivated or not cultivated at all, and they were assigned a low taxable value, like that of small holdings, most likely as a form of social assistance.[38] The Commission also recorded the case of the president of the Zapotok Union of fighters, a Party member, and the first president of the local KDZ, who contributed as much as 19 ha of land to the cooperative. However, by 1952, he unilaterally withdrew, claiming that neither the cooperative nor the KLO provided him with the social assistance he needed.[39]

The above-presented cases suggest that the partisan movement, although radically leftist, also enjoyed support from certain members of the local peasantry's upper stratum. After all, it was no coincidence that even wealthy peasants in Slovenia could become members of the Party. An unsettling assessment emerged among the leading Slovenian communists by the end of the war: small and medium-sized peasants were mainly on the opposing political and military side. In contrast, the well-off peasants were said to be cooperating with and supporting the national liberation struggle.[40] It was no coincidence that, in the Slovenian context, the 1945 reform set the maximum private landholding relatively high – at a full 45 ha of total land.

In practice, however, the share of wealthy peasants among the peasantry in the KPS ranks was negligibly small – merely 0.62% in the autumn of 1950, or a few dozen individuals.[41] Undoubtedly, this was influenced by the policy of exceptionally high taxes and obligations related to mandatory procurement after the war, which posed significant problems and challenges, particularly for better-off peasants. Not to mention severe penalties for not meeting procurement quotas, including prison terms, forced labour, and even confiscation of property.[42] As will be demonstrated in the continuation of this paper, threats of repression by cooperative activists also played a role in the collectivization campaigns. For this reason, it was not uncommon for better-off Slovenian peasants to join KDZs, as they saw them as an opportunity to alleviate the heavy obligations imposed by the state, or simply to avoid bullying. Despite the prejudices and proverbial distrust that leading communists harboured toward wealthy peasants, Franc Popit, the chairman of the Peasants' Commission (*Kmečka komisija*) at the Central Committee of the KPS, stated at the end of 1949 that it was a good thing that the *kulaks* had joined the KDZs.[43] The authorities hoped that the latter would contribute positively to the productivity of the KDZs. Yet as early as the following year

38 SI ZAL LJU 31/9, fasc. 28, fol. 40, Poročilo o finančnem poslovanju KLO Golo–Škrilje, Golo, April 9, 1952, 2.
39 Ibid., KDZ Zapotok, 1.
40 Čepič, *Agrarna reforma*, 66.
41 Drnovšek, *Zapisniki*, 228.
42 Čoh Kladnik, *Kulaški procesi,* 49–100.
43 Ibid., 145.

(December 1950), the Politburo of the Central Committee of the KPS expressed concern that there were already too many *kulaks* – large peasants – within the KDZs. According to the Politburo's assessment, at that time as many as 20–25% of cooperatives in Slovenia were dominated by *kulaks*. It was estimated that 10% of all large Slovenian peasants were members of KDZs, while the memebership proportion of small and medium-sized peasants accounted for only 4–5% of all peasants in Slovenia. Party leaders were hardly reassured by another statistical indicator, which suggested that smallholders and landless peasants (*brezzemljaši*) made up as much as 61% of KDZ membership. They emphasized in particular that this latter figure did not accurately reflect the situation in individual territories and cooperatives. The Territory of Ljutomer – Northeastern Slovenia, for instance, was singled out as one where large peasants predominated.[44] In this context, the situation of the KDZs around Ig appears particularly interesting.

In the following section, I will examine in greater detail five KDZs in the vicinity of Ig, namely those in the villages of Brest, Vrbljene, Iška vas, Zapotok, and Golo. According to Bokovoy, the average Slovenian KDZ in June 1951 encompassed 208 hectares of land.[45] By comparison, the five KDZs from Ig area appear rather small, with an average size of only 130.58 ha of all land available in 1951/1952. The picture, however, changes once we consider the number of peasant households they comprised. Bokovoy reports that in June 1951 the average Slovenian KDZ included 22.5 families, which statistically amounted to 9.2 ha of land per household. In contrast, the KDZs from Ig area comprised fewer than half as many families – on average 10.2 peasant households – resulting in a higher ratio of 12.8 hectares per household. Two cases stand out in particular: the KDZ in Zapotok, where the average reached 18.5 ha per household, and Brest, with 15.4 ha. It is true, however, that the share of arable land (fields and gardens) compared with meadows, pastures, and forests was small in all five KDZs around Ig. The KDZ in Vrbljene had the largest amount of arable land – 27.37 ha – which also had the highest number of peasant households (13). A relatively large amount of arable land was also found in Brest – 21.88 ha – despite its having the fewest households. Since Bokovoy does not provide such detailed data, I refer here to an analysis by the Ministry of Agriculture of the LRS concerning the state of KDZs at the end of 1949. According to these figures, there were 353 KDZs in Slovenia at that time, each averaging 213 ha of land, comprising 23 families, but with only 56 ha of arable land, excluding meadows.[46]

44 Drnovšek, *Zapisniki*, 239–41. Cf. SI AS 1589 III, box 46, fol. 1495, Poročilo z oceno situacije zadružništva v okraju Ljutomer glede na nadaljnjo krepitev in razširitev, November 22, 1950, 3–4.

45 Bokovoy, *Peasants*, 148.

46 SI AS 674, box 98, Analiza dohodkov, izdatkov in razdelitve netto dohodka v kmetijskih delovnih zadrugah Ljudske republike Slovenije (1949), 1 and 1 (Zaključki). Cf. Bokovoy, *Peasants*, 121. It

Despite some pragmatism that existed within the KPS at the time, the case of the failing KDZ named after Ljubo Šercer in Brest near Ig in the autumn of 1951 highlights the resistance of wealthy peasants to the cooperative business model. At that time, seven families were members of the KDZ. According to the Party Revision Commission, the local landowners joined the KDZ to avoid tax burdens and mandatory procurement quotas. Its report also reveals that these peasants had their 1948 income tax debts erased as an »incentive for the newly established cooperative.«[47] It did not help. According to OLO representatives, five were wealthy, one medium-scale, and one a small-scale peasant. There is no information about how much land individual peasants specifically owned. However, the total amount of land contributed to the KDZ was 107.84 ha (including 21.88 ha of fields and gardens). The members collectively retained an additional 6.19 ha for their house plots (*ohišnice*). It is safe to assume that the wealthiest member families could own significantly more than 20 hectares each, not to mention forests, which they did not contribute as their share of membership to the cooperative.[48]

By comparing the data from this document with the brief biographies of activists, partisans, internees, and Militia/Home Guard members from Brest, as presented in Gestrin's study, it is possible to confirm – with a relatively high degree of certainty – the wartime involvement of three KDZ members, based on matching names, surnames, and details such as economic and marital status. With somewhat less certainty, the same method also allows us to infer the likely wartime roles of several other cooperative members.

Jože, the son of a well-off peasant, initially served as an activist, assisting the partisans. He was later sent to the Rab concentration camp by the Italians. After his release, he was forcibly conscripted into the Anti-Communist Militia outpost in Ig, but eventually escaped to join the partisans.[49] A married couple, Andrej and Ana, were both activists of the liberation movement and were arrested by the Home Guard in 1944. She was then sent to Ravensbrück, while he was sent to

should be noted again that there is a certain ambiguity in Bokovoy's presentation of data concerning the amount of arable land supposedly available to Slovenian KDZs. For 1949, Bokovoy states that all Slovenian KDZs had at their disposal 75,121 hectares out of a total of 736,000 hectares of arable land, on the basis of which she concludes that they accounted for 10.2% of all arable land in Slovenia. This reasoning creates the impression that the average Slovenian KDZ at that time possessed around 212 hectares of arable land. However, the cited document from the Ministry of Agriculture of the LRS for 1949 indicates that 212 hectares represents, at most, the total area of *all* types of land combined. The ministry's report lists almost the same overall area under Slovenian KDZs – 75,169 hectares – as Bokovoy does, but with the following composition: fields and gardens (15,360 ha), orchards (2,105 ha), vineyards (2,349 ha), meadows (14,058 ha), pastures (19,019 ha), forests (19,855 ha), fishponds (19 ha), marshes and reed beds (144 ha), and barren land (2,259 ha).

47 SI ZAL LJU 31/9, box 28, fol. 40, Poročilo o finančnem poslovanju KLO Tomišelj, April 7, 1952, 1.

48 SI ZAL LJU 31/9, box 106, fol. 213, Poročilo o izrednem pregledu Kmetijske delovne zadruga »Ljubo Šercer« Brest, November 12–14, 1951, 1, 5.

49 Gestrin, *Svet*, 151.

Dachau.[50] With much greater caution, we can also identify the president of KDZ Brest and a Party member, Janko, a small-scale peasant, from Gestrin's list. It is possible that during the war, he was a member of the OF field committee (*terenski odbor OF*), arrested by the Home Guard in early 1944, and later sent to Dachau, where he was subjected to medical experiments.[51] With similar caution, Ivan, the vice president of the KDZ and a Party member, can be identified from Gestrin's list as an OF activist. He was later interned on the island of Rab, arrested by the Home Guard, and ultimately sent to Dachau.[52]

The most contentious case, however, is undoubtedly that of the Medved family. According to our document, they were a wealthy family and members of the KDZ at the time. However, Gestrin's research indicates that several individuals with the same surname in Brest served with the liberation movement, supported partisans with food, were executed as OF activists, but also in the Anti-Communist Militia and the Home Guards. One of the latter initially joined the partisans but, after being interned on Rab, switched to the Militia. Since it is not at all unusual for even small villages like Brest to have multiple households sharing the same surname, I cannot reliably reconstruct the wartime orientation of the Medved family as mentioned in the OLO record.[53]

In the case of KDZ Brest, OLO representatives did not record any conflicts among cooperative members stemming from the different roles they played during the war. All indications suggest that the most disliked figure was the cooperative president, Janko. According to the OLO representatives' report, one cooperative member, Janko, is said to demean people and pay little attention to their suggestions for improving the cooperative's work. The OLO representatives attributed Janko's unpopularity to the fact that he was a small-scale peasant, while the other members were well-off peasants. The OLO representatives recorded the opinions of the cooperative members, particularly highlighting Jože's wife, who stated that they would not allow themselves to be »commanded by a beggar«. For the female member of the Medved family, membership in the cooperative was reportedly humiliating. She was said to be one of the largest landowners in Brest, upon whom many small peasants depended, yet now the latter were allegedly giving her orders.[54] Another female cooperative member complained about the workload, claiming that she had never been a »pig-house maid« (*svinjska dekla*) before and that she was now »a slave to the cooperative«. Since Janko was elected

50 Ibid., 151, 179.
51 Ibid., 151–152.
52 Ibid. 151.
53 Ibid., 152, 165. Cf. SI ZAL LJU 31/9, box 106, fol. 213, Poročilo o izrednem pregledu Kmetijske delovne zadruga »Ljubo Šercer« Brest, November 12–14, 1951, 10.
54 SI ZAL LJU 31/9, box 106, fol. 213, Poročilo o izrednem pregledu Kmetijske delovne zadruga »Ljubo Šercer« Brest, November 12–14, 1951, 10.

president by the KDZ members, we have little reason to doubt that the higher authorities put their strong muscle behind his bid. Apart from the president and vice president, all other cooperative members had been actively working on leaving since May 1951, even hiring a lawyer from Ljubljana. According to the report from the OLO representatives, KDZ Brest existed only on paper at that time. The cooperative lacked a brigadier to oversee communal work, and the peasants stored their produce in their own homes. They generated most of their income from their house plots or forests. Individual families maintained cooperative pigs and cattle. The cooperative animals were less well cared for than those kept under private management. The communal fields were either not properly cultivated, or the cooperative members worked only in those areas that corresponded to their individual share. KDZ even hired labour for work in the fields.[55] During the visit of the Party Commission in April 1952, four cooperative members who had already left the cooperative were retroactively (heavily) taxed because they had failed to deliver their produce to the cooperative or had deliberately not achieved the same productivity on cooperative land as private peasants.[56] What is most interesting about the specific report is that the OLO representatives limited themselves to describing the problems within the cooperative. It demonstrated its communist sensitivity by emphasizing the class character of the conflict within the cooperative – but omitting the *kulak* menace. Yet, it never even hinted at what the solution might be.

The reports of the Party Revision Commission, which reviewed the broader area of Ig in the spring of 1952, regularly noted most of the issues that were already occurring in Brest, most commonly, the persistence of individual family farming instead of collective brigade work. The main difference was that the operations of the other four KDZs were burdened by disputes that apparently had little or no connection to the class differentiation among their members. It appears that, among the five KDZs in the surrounding area, only the one in Vrbljene functioned effectively. The cooperative comprised 13 families who collectively contributed 117.49 ha of land (including 27.37 ha of fields). There, the biggest challenges arose with the consolidation of land, which is why they primarily focused on livestock and pig farming at the time. This was done using the brigade system, which was virtually unique in the area. The cooperative owned machinery, including a tractor. Relations among the cooperative members were reportedly good, and four out of the five members of the management board were Party members.[57]

55 Ibid., 2–6, 9–11.
56 SI ZAL LJU 31/9, box 28, fol. 40, Poročilo o finančnem poslovanju KLO Tomišelj, April 7, 1952, 2.
57 Ibid., KDZ Vrbljene, 1–2.

The situation in all the other four KDZs was exceptionally poor. One could even say it was catastrophic. Undoubtedly, the most severe crisis at the time was in the KDZ of Iška vas. The cooperative united 11 families, totaling 130.8 ha of land (including 19.79 ha of fields and gardens). At the time of the Party commission visit, the cooperative did not even have a president. The previous president refused to perform this role because the cooperative members would not allow him to inspect the cooperative's livestock, which was kept in the barns of individual families. The members of the KDZ did not contribute their forests to the cooperative; instead, they used them independently and did not pay taxes on the income generated. The KDZ clearly had shared draft animals, but the members used them on their house plots without paying any compensation, despite being required to do so according to the rules. The cooperative was fatally crippled by the previously mentioned arrest of three members, in which, according to testimonies, the president of the KLO Ig and the initiator of the KDZ, Janez, was allegedly involved.[58] The cooperative members who had been arrested and then released refused to work. They demanded clarification of the circumstances surrounding their arrest.[59] One of them, a former president of the KLO, claimed that the information used against him and others was obtained from non-members and enemies of the KDZ. »People reproach me, asking what I have profited from dedicating myself to the KDZ.« He added that he had been a partisan since 1941 and believed he deserved a Commemorative Medal of the Partisans of 1941.[60] It seems that Janez had only one ally in the cooperative, Cene, but he did not participate in the work on the communal land, as he was employed at a sawmill in Ig. His wife is said to have mocked the remaining cooperative members as they passed by her house on their way to work. Although Cene contributed his arable land to the cooperative, testimonies recorded by the Party Revision Commission report that he nonetheless worked the land for his own benefit on several occasions, typically when cooperative members had failed to cultivate it promptly. The Party commission recommended in his case that he should be charged for the crops he produced. Both Janez and Cene were members of the Party. Among the cooperative members, an opinion formed that if even the two communists were unwilling to work in the KDZ, neither would they.

The conflict surrounding the arrested cooperative members also reveals a tragic and chilling local episode from the early stages of collectivization. The wife of one of the arrested, Tina, who had been in the partisans and a Party member since 1944, told the Revision Commission: »My husband, as well as I, worked a

58 Ibid., KDZ Iška vas; Poročilo o pregledu KDZ Iška vas, April 8, 1952, 1–2.
59 Ibid., KDZ Iška vas.
60 Ibid., Iška vas: Izjave nekaterih članov.

lot on organizing the KDZ. I pushed people into the cooperative. I even told them that they would be evicted if they did not join, to get as many as possible. But this was not something I made up myself; it was according to the directive of the activists from the Territory (probably KPS committee).« Tina also mentioned that after the arrest of the KDZ members, people were saying, »It's what they deserve; now they're left with their cooperative«. The Territorial Party Committee was said to trust the president of KLO Ig, Janez, but not them in Iška vas. However, they too began to lose trust in the committee.[61] The expulsion of communists from the Party due to their involvement in religious ceremonies undoubtedly did not contribute to easing the tense atmosphere in Iška vas. Ana was considering leaving the KDZ, and at the same time, she informed the Commission that her husband had been expelled from the Party because he had married her in a church. The church wedding took place solely because it was the wish of her husband's parents, not because he himself held any religious belief. She and her husband did not think this was fair.[62]

The situation in KDZ Zapotok was not much better either. It appears that the breakup of the unified Party organization Visoko–Zapotok was also linked to attitudes toward the local KDZ. According to the testimony of a local communist, the residents of Visoko reportedly organized shock work brigades in KDZ Zapotok multiple times. At the same time, the members of the cooperative allegedly stood by idly, merely watching them work.[63] However, this was far from the only problem. KDZ Zapotok was very large by Slovenian standards, as 8 families managed a total of 147.75 ha of land, including only 7.89 ha of fields/gardens but as much as 28.50 ha of forest.[64] Established as early as 1946, the cooperative was mainly engaged in sheep farming. The first problem highlighted by the Party commission was the cooperative's forests, which the members were exploiting for their benefit, with the income going into their own pockets. It is said that this was due to the cooperative's extremely poor financial condition, which left the members with no alternative means of earning money. Moreover, five members of the cooperative were privately cultivating a total of 80 ha of land, for which they were allegedly paying a laughably low tax. All of them were members of the Party.[65] It appears that the core of the cooperative was comprised of very wealthy peasants. Its first president, a Party member, contributed 19ha, but by the time the commission arrived, he had already unilaterally resigned from the cooperative.

61 Ibid.
62 Ibid., KDZ Iška vas.
63 Ibid., Visoko (Statements by Party members).
64 Ibid., KDZ Zapotok.
65 Ibid., KDZ Zapotok, 1–3.

Despite the undoubtedly strong economic position of many KDZ members, some faced social issues, such as applying for disability benefits and similar forms of assistance. For example, the first president of KDZ applied for a disability pension for his wife, but he was denied. Another KDZ member, a wealthy peasant, a Party member, and father of five minor children, complained because his wife, who had bone tuberculosis, did not receive social support, due to the actions of the previous president of the KDZ.[66] A similar case involved another female member of the cooperative, a well-off peasant and a Party member, who unsuccessfully requested assistance from the cooperative when her father fractured his spine.[67] Another example is a female member of the cooperative who had become unable to work due to illness years earlier. Other members of the cooperative felt she should leave, as they believed they were no longer benefiting from her. The Party Commission recommended that these issues be addressed again.

The second problem was corruption, which led the Commission to propose a visit from a special three-member committee, consisting of a representative from the cooperative fund, a financial trustee, and a criminal investigator. The mentioned issues include thefts and unauthorized purchases for the benefit of the former KDZ president. Additionally, two prominent members were reportedly using the cooperative's draft animals on their house plots without authorization. In contrast, the other members either did not have this option or were charged for the service. Between 1946 and 1952, as many as nine members unilaterally left the cooperative. At the time of the commission's visit, five more members expressed their intention to leave, citing the unbearable conditions of mismanagement, an incorrect or unfair calculation of workdays (*trudodni*), and their poor social standing. Despite the good weather, the cooperative members did not even begin working the cooperative land, and in general, all activities were at a standstill. The meetings of the managing body of KDZ were reportedly marked by constant disputes. The relationships between the cooperative members seemed hostile.[68]

As noted in the previous section, the villagers of Golo received the Party Commission with displeasure. They faced the prospect of an unwanted merger with the municipality of Ig and were still waiting for electricity to be brought to their village. It was also noted that the local Party organization, despite having a relatively large membership, was inactive. The same was true for the local KDZ Golo, which, according to the Commission, existed only in name. On paper, the KDZ comprised 12 families with a total of 149 ha of land. (There are

66 SI ZAL, LJU 31/9, fasc. 28, fol. 40, KDZ Zapotok.
67 Ibid., Zapotok (statement by a female Party member).
68 Ibid., KDZ Zapotok.

no data on the distribution of agricultural land by use.) However, all cooperative members aimed for individual family economy. The main cause, according to the Commission, was the excessive number of private peasants living nearby who were not members of the cooperative, but who had significantly rebuilt their households and had a better standard of living than the cooperators. KDZ connected three villages: Selnik, Suša, and Golo. In Selnik and Suša, the cooperators cultivated the land in the traditional way, on their family plots, whereas in Golo, this was only partially done according to the collective principle. In Suša, they did not pay any income tax. The cooperative did not have a common agricultural building, and the livestock was located with individual peasants. Furthermore, there were reportedly disputes and divisions among the KDZ Golo cooperators. Somewhat paradoxically, the Commission discovered that the peasants, despite everything, were satisfied with the cooperative, although they wished it had operated under different conditions than it did at the time.[69]

CONCLUSION

In the present study, the case of KDZ Vrbljene stands out clearly. Although the Commission may have exaggerated the description of the good conditions in this KDZ, it collapsed by 1953. There can be little doubt, however, that the local relationships, compared to the all-out conflicts that prevailed pretty much everywhere else, were nearly idyllic. The reason behind the near-complete standstill of the KDZs in the vicinity of Ig was likely the significant gap between the expectations invested in the KDZs by the revolutionary authorities in Ljubljana/Belgrade on the one hand, and the aspirations held by peasants in the Ig area on the other. The authorities saw the KDZs as a means to eliminate the fragmented small-scale land structure in Slovenia, consolidating it into larger economic units capable of providing the state with agricultural produce at low prices. Although the Slovenian/Yugoslav model of collectivization was distinctive in that it largely maintained private ownership of the contributed land to KDZs, the long-term vision was nevertheless aimed at the abolition of private family farming. The path to this goal included a different model of management, income distribution, work organization, and, most notably, a transformation of the social status of cooperative members. While the cited documents do not permit a precise determination of the aspirations of various groups of peasants – aspirations that undoubtedly differed among them – it can be asserted with considerable certainty that the core of the KDZs consisted of well-off peasants who likely joined primarily to avoid

69 Ibid., Mnenje o KDZ Golo, Zapotok in Iška vas; Poročilo o pregledu KOZ Golo, April 4 and 5, 1952.

the burdens of high taxes and mandatory procurement quotas. This was most evident in the case of Brest, but certainly not only there, as the brigade system of work (except in Vrbljene) hardly existed anywhere. Family (private) farming continued to prevail in most cooperatives.

Another important insight provided by the documents is the gap between the considerable number of Party members in the villages and KDZs, and the weak influence of the local Party as a revolutionary force in the crisis. The communists have been observed to act as a revolutionary vanguard only in rare instances. Once again, the most striking example is Brest, where it is hard to imagine that a »beggar« would have been elected president of the KDZ without the intervention of the higher authorities. An example of dedicated communists could also be found in the case of the shock brigade action by the peasants from Visoko, who went to work in the KDZ Zapotok, only to be demoralized by the passivity of the local KDZ members. A particularly notable and chilling case was undoubtedly Tina and her husband from Iška vas. With some local partisan veterans, they both answered the call of the Party to join KDZ. Soon, they displayed an above-average level of revolutionary vigilance, as among the persuasive tactics, severe threats of evictions were also mentioned for those unwilling to join the KDZ. Ultimately, this activism was likely halted not only by the arrests but also by the mockery and resentment of their fellow villagers. These examples also suggest that there was probably a limited number of partisan veterans and peasant-communists who were idealistic enough to view KDZs as more than just tax havens. The aforementioned activist enthusiasm likely occurred in the earlier phase of collectivization.

The performance of the local Party in the terminal phase of KDZs gives a relatively poor impression. The limits of the local revolutionary authority were ultimately evident in the fact that peasants frequently evaded paying taxes for certain economic activities, such as the exploitation of forests (Iška vas), as well as their resistance to the brigade system of work in KDZs. It further appears that the Party secretary in Ig, who was responsible for a broader area in 1952, showed no interest in collectivization. Almost all the issues related to his work were limited to the Territorial Metal Industry, where he served as director. Compared to Janez, the president of the KLO Ig, the Party secretary was a significantly weaker figure. Janez, on the other hand, showed more interest, particularly in the KDZ in Iška vas, but only in connection with his interests. His ambitions went far beyond local KDZs. At the end of the day, local – village Party organizations were largely left alone, more often than not without proper direction or guidance from higher authorities. Both commissions, the Party and the »civil« one from the OLO, proposed certain solutions in their reports, but these addressed only acute problems.

In both cases, it was more a matter of firefighting than a thorough analysis that would holistically address the serious issues of collectivization. As for Party meetings – when held at all, the documents suggest that they were primarily a space for disputes (especially in Zapotok). These meetings were more focused on bargaining the material interests of individuals and weighing wartime merits than on addressing the issues of KDZs. There can certainly be no doubt that the conflicts between former partisan fighters and Party members further strained the relations within the KDZs.

It is also significant that the documents (with the notable exception of Brest) nowhere mention conflicts that, according to the participants, had an explicitly class-based background. According to the witnesses, the disputes divided people into partisans and White Guards, more and less deserving partisans, church loyalists (*klerikalci*) and non-believers, KDZ members and non-members, communists, and non-communists, less taxed and more taxed, those entitled to certain privileges and those who were not, those who prospered and those who did not, and so on. The case of Brest once again stands out as the most notable exception. Based on the documents, it was only there, in the conflict situation, that class consciousness came to the forefront. And it came from the wealthy peasants, who felt and vividly described the degradation of their social position.

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Márton László

Anti-Collectivization Movements in the Former Háromszék County in 1950

INTRODUCTION

This study examines the collectivization and anti-collectivization movements that occurred in the former Háromszék County between 1949 and 1950.* So far, only interview collections have been published on this topic: József Gazda conducted interviews in several localities[1], László Balogh explored what happened in one settlement through interviews[2], and Levente Benkő used archival sources in addition to interviews for his study regarding one settlement.[3] Another known participant, József Bende, has published a volume of memoirs[4]. The present study utilizes these sources as well. Still, in addition to them, it primarily relies on previously underutilized archival sources to provide a detailed and comprehensive picture of the collectivization of the region and the movements it generated.

* The research was partially supported by the Association of the Former Political Prisoners - Covasna County Branch.

1 Gazda, *Jaj, mik történtek.*
2 Balogh, *Történelem.*
3 Benkő, Minden.
4 Bende, *Zord idők sodrásában.*

HISTORICAL CONDITIONS

Transylvania, in a broader sense, is located in Central Europe, to the northwest of the Eastern and Southern Carpathian Mountains in Romania, extending to the border with Hungary. During the Middle Ages and the Modern Era, several groups of people lived in Transylvania, including the subgroup of the Hungarians named the Szeklers. They lived in separate administrative units called »Szekler seats« (*szék* meaning »seat« in Hungarian), and the totality of these was referred to as Szeklerland (Terra Siculorum). One of the Szekler seats, located near the bend of the Carpathians, was called Háromszék (meaning »three seats«), because it was formed in the early 17th century by the union of three smaller seats.[5]

In the Middle Ages, Transylvania was part of the Kingdom of Hungary. However, after the Battle of Mohács in 1526, it became a Turkish vassal state, known as the Principality of Transylvania. Following the decline of Turkish power, it became part of the Habsburg Empire from 1690, and later, in 1865, it was unified with Hungary. Following the Austro-Hungarian Compromise of 1867, it became part of the Austro-Hungarian Empire.[6] In 1876, as part of a large-scale administrative reorganization, the seats in Transylvania were abolished, and provinces were established in their place. At this point, the Háromszék seat was reorganized into Háromszék Province. After the First World War, with the Treaty of Trianon, Transylvania (including Szeklerland) was annexed to Romania. In 1925, as part of another administrative reorganization, the provinces were renamed counties (megyék). Thus, the administration unit in question became Háromszék County. This changed again in 1950, when Romania abolished counties and, following the Soviet model, created raions, which were then merged into districts. Thus, for most of the former Háromszék County, the Sepsiszentgyörgy and Kézdivásárhely raions were established and became part of the Stalin (Braşov) region. After several administrative reorganizations, in 1968 Romania returned to the county system, and the area of the former Háromszék County was reorganized into Covasna County, which remains in existence today.

5 Egyed, Hermann, and Oborni (eds.), *Székelyföld története II.*, 198.
6 Makkai and Szász (eds.), *Erdély története*, 881. Szász, *Erdély története*, 1505–06, 1624.

GEOGRAPHICAL, TERRITORIAL, AND AGRICULTURAL CONDITIONS

Geographically, Háromszék County included the Háromszék[7] and Barót Basins[8], as well as part of the surrounding mountain ranges. The northern part of the Háromszék Basin is located at a higher altitude and has a cooler climate. At the same time, the southern part (also called the Lower Háromszék Basin) has a milder climate (with an annual average temperature of 6.5–8°C and precipitation of 550–750 mm), which allows the cultivation of wheat, corn, and sugar beets.[9] One year before the beginning of collectivization in Romania, on January 25, 1948, the total area of Háromszék County was 368.640 ha, of which 326.663 ha (88.6%) were under cultivation/exploitation, divided as follows.[10]

Table 1: Land Use in Háromszék County, 1948

Arable land		Irrigated vegetable gardens		Hay meadows		Pastures		Vineyards	
ha	%	ha	%	ha	%	ha	%	ha	%
74,495	22.8	132	0.04	29,873	9.1	21,539	6.5	2	0.0

Orchards		Forests		Yards		Other and infertile areas	
ha	%	ha	%	ha	%	ha	%
439	0.1	193,262	59.1	3,286	1.0	3,635	1.1

Source: Golopentia and Onică, Recensământul agricol, 45, 47

The cultivated areas were almost 60% forested, followed in extent by arable land (22%), hay meadows (9.1%), and pastures (6.5%). The proportion of irrigated vegetable gardens was negligible, one possible reason for this being the lack of large urban agglomerations that could provide a market for such produce. The area planted with vineyards was also minimal, due to climatic reasons: much of the county's territory had a relatively cool climate, which limited the number of places where grapes could ripen.

One of Háromszék County's persistent problems throughout the 20th century was the heavily distorted land ownership structure, characterized by an excessive

7 The Háromszék Basin is bordered to the north by the Nemira Mountains, to the east by the Háromszék Mountains, to the south by the Barcaság Basin, and to the west by the Barót Mountains. The Bodoc Mountains extend into the basin from the north.

8 The Barót Basin is bordered to the north by the Harghita Mountains, to the east by the Barót Mountains, to the south by the Barcaság Basin, and to the west by the Persani Mountains.

9 Benkő and Oborni (eds.), *Székelyföld története*, 56–57.

10 Golopentia and Onică, *Recensământul agricol,* 45, 47.

number of smallholdings. This problem was attempted to be solved during the national land reforms. The land reform closest to the collectivization process occurred at the end of the Second World War, with the land reform law promulgated on March 23, 1945. Lands exceeding 50 ha in size were expropriated.[11] In the villages of Háromszék County, land distribution committees were established after the summer and autumn passage of the front in 1944, mainly in February 1945. Part of the land distributions were already carried out between February 22 and April 12, 1945.[12] The primary problem during the implementation of the land reform was the lack of sufficient land to be distributed, meaning that typically only one or two holds (Hungarian acres) or smaller plots could be allocated to each family. It was very rare for an applicant to receive more than two holds.[13] According to a partial report, a total of 3,919 smallholders (or individuals without land) in Háromszék County were allocated land, with an average of 2 holds per family.[14] At least 8,676 cadastral holds of land were distributed.[15] According to the 1948 agricultural survey, after the land reform, 47,307 landowners shared 224,936 parcels, distributed as follows.[16]

Table 2: Distribution of landowners in Háromszék County in 1948

Number of landowners	Distribution of landowners according to the size of the land owned																	
	<5,000 m^2	%	5.000 m^2–1 ha	%	1–2 ha	%	2–3 ha	%	3–5 ha	%	5–10 ha	%	10–20 ha	%	20–50 ha	%	> 50 ha	%
47,307	9,104	19.2	7,822	16.5	10,120	21.3	6,518	13.7	6,281	13.2	4,764	10.0	1,742	3.6	620	1.3	336	0.7

Source: Golopentia and Onică, *Recensământul agricol,* 45

As we can see, small landowners (up to 3 ha) constituted more than half of the landowners (57%), with the proportion of owners holding progressively larger landholdings decreasing thereafter. While Table 2 reflects the number of individual landowners categorized by the total size of their landholdings, Table 3 presents the structure of landholdings in the county, broken down by the size of each holding. As of January 25, 1948, there were 29,473 landholdings in Háromszék County, distributed by size as follows:

11 *Monitorul Oficial* nr. 68/1945, Legea No. 187/1945.
12 Cserey and Kozák, *Adatok*, 90, 94.
13 Ibidem, 91, 94–95.
14 Ibid, 95.
15 Ibid, 95.
16 Golopentia and Onică, *Recensământul agricol,* 45–46.

Table 3: Distribution of the land holdings in Háromszék County in 1948

Number of holdings	Distribution of land holdings by size of area															
	< 5,000 m²	%	5,001 m²–1 ha	%	1–3 ha	%	3–5 ha	%	5–10 ha	%	10–20 ha	%	20–50 ha	%	>50 ha	%
29,473	3,415	11.5	3,423	11.6	8,376	28.4	5,213	17.6	5,543	18.8	2,423	8.22	815	2.7	265	0.8

Source: Golopentia and Onică, *Recensământul agricol*, 46

We can see that smallholdings (up to 1 ha) made up nearly a quarter of the total landholdings (23.1%), smallholdings (1–3 ha) accounted for more than a quarter (28.4%), while medium-sized holdings (3–5 hectares and 5–10 ha) represented a significant proportion (36.4%). Larger landholdings were represented in decreasing proportions. As for the population: on January 25, 1948, the total population of the county was 127,330 persons, of which the rural population accounted for 91.8% (116,964 people).[17] Overall, before collectivization, the majority of Háromszék County's population lived in rural areas, with smallholders comprising more than half of the landowners, and over half of the total landholdings consisted of small farms. Among the nearly four thousand peasants who received land during the 1945 land reform, a stronger attachment to individual farming likely developed.

COLLECTIVIZATION IN ROMANIA

On the night of March 3, 1949, the remaining large landowners in Romania were taken from their homes by the security forces and forcibly relocated. Their movable and immovable properties (except for a suitcase of clothes) were confiscated by the state, and state farms were established on their lands. In Háromszék County, around 80 people were deported at this time.[18] On March 3, 1949, the plenary session of the Romanian Workers' Party began, where collectivization was announced: the consolidation of privately owned land into collective (communal) farms. In the newly created *collective farm*, all the land, major work tools, and livestock (both live and dead inventory) became common property. Members could keep a certain number of domestic animals and could also receive 0.25–0.5 ha of land for family use. The submitted plots were consolidated,

17 Golopentia and Georgescu, *Populația*, 40.

18 A contemporary source mentions 79 individuals, while an anthology lists 35 families with 81 individuals – Cătănuș and Roske, *Colectivizarea*, 214; Gál, *D.O. Kényszerlakhely*, 115–16.

and if a non-participating landowner's plot obstructed this process, their plot was expropriated as well, and they were compensated with an equivalent parcel in another area of the boundary. The collective members were organized into brigades of 60–80 people, working under the leadership of a brigade leader. Work norms were established for each stage of the work, which were then converted into workday units. The harvest and monetary income were distributed among the members according to these units. Naturally, the village residents did not want to give up the means of livelihood they had accumulated over a lifetime – the land that provided their security and independence, as well as the tools necessary for cultivation and draft animals. As a result, collectivization led to a prolonged conflict between rural society and the state.

From March 1949 to mid-June 1950, the organization proceeded relatively cautiously, but in mid-1950, a central collectivization plan was imposed on the county party organizations, and its implementation was only possible through pressure and violence. From June to September 1950, mass and violent collectivization occurred throughout the country, resulting in both smaller and larger uprisings in the villages undergoing collectivization. Eventually, the government slowed down and then halted collectivization in the fall, until the strengthening of the already established collective farms was achieved.[19]

In Háromszék County, as well as in other counties in Romania, the organization of collective farms began in 1949. The organizing work was directed by the party organs, through party organizers sent to the villages. During collectivization, the landless people from rural society were the first to join the new collective economy, as, according to the rules, they could receive 0.25–0.5 acres of land for their use.[20] Those struggling with little land or insufficient agricultural equipment saw the collective farm as a new opportunity. Further incentives were provided by advantages in commodity distribution[21] or the easing of tax burdens.[22] Enrollment of landless people into future collective farms threatened economic sustainability due to the large number of members per small area of land. This led to the paradoxical situation of organizers blocking the enrollment of landless peasants (»agrarian proletarians«), who were considered the rural allies of the regime according to propaganda. A party instructor described the process in Háromszék County in October 1950 as follows: »[...] the poor people in the villages were completely neglected. [...] we found poor peasants and agrarian

19 Levy, Primul val, 66–75.

20 Statutul model al gospodăriei agricole colective [The model charter of the collective farms.].

21 Farmers enrolled in the collective economy received goods in the cooperative stores that were not given to locals who were not enrolled.

22 In Hatolyka, those who enrolled were promised that their delivery obligations would be reduced. ANR SAIC CC-Agr. 79/1950, 63. ANR SJCov PCR Com. Rai.Tg.Sec. 4/1950, 255, 283, 289.

proletarians who wanted to join the collective farms but were not accepted, while the middle peasants and *kulaks* were. After the establishment of the collective farms, these poor peasants had nowhere to work [...] They were not admitted to the [collective] farm, the land of the *kulaks* went into the farm, and the poor peasants were left without work.«[23] According to the Romanian Workers' Party's 1950 spring regulations, each family in a collective farm was to receive 3 ha of agricultural land, with at least 35 families per farm.[24] To reach the target numbers, party activists organizing the collective farms had to seize land from wealthier farmers in the village who resisted being recruited because they had more to lose. Ideological issues also arose, as these wealthier farmers were categorized by party ideology as class enemies – *kulaks*. The party organizers needed these lands for the new collective farms, so they resorted to administrative pressure or violent methods to enlist the targeted wealthy farmers into the collective, using their large plots to meet the 3 ha per family target. For the acquisition of the future collective farm headquarters, in almost every collectivized village, the property of some farmers was seized under the pretext of »economic sabotage«. In many cases, they were imprisoned, and their families had to leave the village. Fellow villagers often openly expressed solidarity with the expelled families.

COLLECTIVIZATION IN HÁROMSZÉK COUNTY

In 1949, collectivization began in Romania, but the process was slow and cautious until the following year. The organization also took place in Háromszék County, with the first collective farm being inaugurated in Torja on August 14, 1949.[25] After this, there was a long pause. In 1950, the establishment of 14 collective farms in the county was planned for the period between March and June.[26] During the first phase of the organization, members of the county party bureau gathered information about the designated villages.[27] By the end of March, 29 villages had been examined, and 14 were selected for the organization of collective farms.[28] In 1950, the first collective farm was inaugurated on May 28 in Angyalos, the second in Lemhény on June 11.

23 Cătănuș and Roske, *Colectivizarea*, 215.
24 Ibid, 188.
25 ANR SJMș, S 1669, 75, 140.
26 ANR-SJCov, PCR Com. Jud.Trei Scaune, 2/1950, 85–88, 113.
27 Number of families, size and composition of land area, number of families from different social groups, influence of the local communist party organization, public sentiment of the population – ANR-SJC, PCR Com. Jud. Trei Scaune 2/1950, 114.
28 ANR-SJCov, PCR Com. Jud. Trei Scaune 2/1950, 121.

In many cases in Háromszék County, the local party leadership decided to collectivize entire villages because they presumed that if only part of the population joined the collective, land exchange during land consolidation would lead to local hostilities. Thus, they considered it more practical to enlist the majority of the population into the new collective.[29] However, this led to the alienation of many smallholders and owners of medium holdings, who made up the majority of the village inhabitants. Indeed, farmers who had not yet turned against the collective farm due to violent recruitment were prompted to resist during the land consolidation process. This happened because quality land was typically assigned for the farm in a single area near the village. This way, farmers whose land was located in this area were obviously allocated exchange land somewhere else, and it was also of lower quality, so they opposed the exchange. Furthermore, due to improper organization, some did not receive any replacement land at all.[30] When they did receive land, they were forced to accept it. This often meant the intervention of the armed forces, which only increased the ranks of those opposed to the collective farms. Complete collectivization turned most of the village population against the regime's efforts.

By mid-June 1950, the county's collectivization entered a new phase. Mass and violent organizations began in parts of the country, expanding to other administrative units in early July. »The organization must continue, as long as there is no bloodshed,« a leading party secretary ordered the organizers.[31] By this time, administrative pressure tactics were employed, such as forced labor, harassment,[32] threats of children being expelled from school, coercion regarding persuasion of family members, accusations of anti-regime statements, blackmail over the land exchange, blackmail over past infractions, and threats of job termination. Intimidation tactics included the use of the Militia (Police) and Securitate (Secret Police) forces in the recruitment process, as well as physical violence (beatings and whippings).

29 ANR-SAIC, CC-Agr. 79/1950, 15.

30 In Felsőcsernáton, for example, out of 85 farmers, 65 did not receive exchange land, and in Dálnok, 44 out of 73 did not – Cătănuș and Roske, *Colectivizarea*, 215.

31 ANR-SAIC, CC-Agr. 79/1950, 126.

32 E.g., Calling the headquarters of the Temporary Committee at night, with the implication of the authorities in case someone opposed.

Peasant Resistance and Anti-Collectivization Movements

In locations where force was applied during the collectivization process, uprisings always followed. In Angyalos, for example, party organizers employed pressure tactics, specifically blackmail: children attending school were instructed to persuade their parents to sign the collective farm enrollment declaration. Those employed in state positions were also urged to join. Local residents were threatened with prison sentences over minor past offences or with increased taxes. Some village officials were sent home to persuade their families to join.[33] Land consolidation was also used as a means to pressure, with threats of distributing the worst and most distant fields to those who refused to join, along with the taxes that applied to better-quality lands. Two influential smallholders agreed to join after being threatened with the loss of the land they had received during the 1945 land reform. During this land reform, as members of the local land distribution committee, these two were responsible for measuring the land. The locals trusted them and listened to them – they said that Pap and Molnár knew how to fight for the land, and they were confident in their actions. As long as the two farmers did not join the collective farm, they were not willing to do so either.[34] Most of the smallholders followed suit, but the land exchange documentation was signed under the supervision of the Militia.[35]

When looking at the resistance of the farmers, Lemhény is of special importance: Here, on the night of April 23, 1950, a local party organizer's window was smashed with stones because of their active agitation for collectivization. Coercion was also used here: students from Lemhény were sent home from school with the message that they should not return until their parents had signed up for the collective farm.[36] On May 5, a poster appeared on a building with the following text: »Comrades and peasant brothers, do not join the collective, as you will lose your property rights and your freedom! Down with those who want the kolkhoz! Freedom for the people, perseverance, comrades!«[37] After these events, the Securitate arrested several suspects.[38] After the arrests, a second poster appeared. The suspect was arrested and convicted. Also, the farmers who had been previously accused with the first poster were not released immediately but were kept in prison for 1–2 weeks until they agreed to join the collective. Land consolidation posed the most significant difficulty here as well, as it was necessary to

33 Those who were threatened included all those who cultivated land for the tithe, traded, bought, or sold land, etc. ANR-SAIC, CC-Agr. 79/1950, 4, 5, 13, 100.
34 ANR-SJCov, PCR Com. Jud. Trei Scaune 36/1950, f. 8–9. ANR-SAIC, CC-Agr. 79/1950, 3, 12.
35 ANR-SAIC, CC-Agr. 79/1950, 13, 153.
36 ANR-SJMş, S 1669, 94. ANR-SAIC, CC-Agr. 79/1950, 5, 59, 64.
37 ANR-SJMş, S 1669, 253.
38 ANR-SAIC, CC-Agr. 79/1950, 14, 41, 59.

measure out the land of about 500 farmers elsewhere, many of whom had small properties of 2–3 ha in multiple locations. This meant that approximately 4,600 plots were involved in the exchange.[39] Due to the resistance of the farmers, the signing of the protocols took two months, as no one wanted to accept the lower-quality land. Those who, after verbal persuasion, still refused the land exchange and did not appear at the town hall when called, were transported there at night by the Militia for another attempt at persuasion. Those who still resisted were held in a room until they were persuaded to accept, and some were taken to the Militia in Kézdivásárhely.[40]

Resistance was also significant in Sepsikőröspatak, where on July 1, 1950, the day before the collective farm was to be inaugurated, local people overwhelmingly refused to sign up, and a protest against collectivization began. As a result, ten locals were summoned to the town hall by the Militia, where seven farmers agreed to sign the enrollment declaration. The other three, who resisted, were taken to the Militia headquarters.[41] The collective farm inauguration occurred on July 2, 1950. At the same time, the authorities took a couple from the village.[42]

A new form of blackmail was employed in Kézdimartonfalva, where 72 smallholders were recruited into the collective. However, due to resistance from wealthier landowners, pressure tactics were also used, including compulsory transportation tasks for farmers. They had to transport stone and wood in quantities impossible to achieve. The only way to be exempted from these tasks was to join the collective farm. Another method involved local state employees: teachers and civil servants, who were tasked with convincing four or five stubborn families to join, under threat of imprisonment or job loss. With these methods, 94 more families were enrolled.

During collectivization, the resisting farmers were taken to the town hall by the Militia to sign the land exchange records. For the acquisition of the house selected to serve as the collective farm's headquarters, the family residing in it was subjected to impossible transportation duties. After failing to meet the transportation requirements and the task of cultivating a land plot, the heads of these families were sentenced to prison, and their property was confiscated as punishment for economic sabotage.[43] In another case, the owner of a property was sentenced to prison for economic sabotage and had his property confiscated. His family had no choice but to move. A pressure tactic was also the blackmailing of state-dependent individuals: workers transporting goods for the cooperative had their

39 ANR-SJCov, PCR Com. Jud. Trei Scaune 3/1950, 4–5.
40 ANR-SAIC, CC-Agr. 79/1950, 5, 14, 59, 62, 64, 73, 79.
41 ANR-SAIC, CC-Agr. 79/1950, 89.
42 Ibid. ANR-SJCov, PCR Com. Jud. Trei Scaune 47/1950, 56–57.
43 ANR-SAIC, CC-Agr. 65/195f. 0, 62, 261. ANR-SJCov, PCR Com. Rai.Tg.Sec. 3/1950, 47.

employment terminated if they refused to join the collective farm.[44] This was applied in Sepsirákos. One escape attempt in the region involved a farmer who only enrolled his own land in the collective farm, not his wife's dowry, to »maintain a private farm alongside the collective farm.«[45] Detention was yet another method applied in Felsőcsernáton. The Securitate imprisoned and arrested three farmers who resisted collectivization, and they were given the bylaws of the collective farm to study while in custody. Force was also used: people were flogged to force them to join the collective.[46]

With regards to the pressure tactics, the phenomenon of »land hunger« is also important, as it gave rise to blackmail opportunities for enrolling locals. In Lécfalva, for example, by May 1950, 103 hectares of land had been handed over to the state farm, which the local administration managed. Then one night (July 16, 1950), 34 locals with small landholdings plowed and sowed 1 hectare of land each from the state farm's territory. Taking advantage of this, party organizers, according to the authorities' orders, arrested and detained five farmers from the village, releasing them only on the condition that they enroll in the collective farm. They were then instructed to recruit others. Fearing reprisals, 72 families enrolled in the collective farm in a short period. After the enrollment of a prominent middle peasant, the entire village of 236 families followed suit.[47] The collective farm's headquarters were set up in the house of a large landowner, who had been sentenced to a year in prison and complete confiscation of his property for »sabotaging the sowing plan«. His family left the village after the sentence. Another landowner's property was also confiscated and given to the collective farm.[48] In Kézdimárkosfalva, too, the properties necessary for the collective farm were obtained illegally. Four influential heads of families were sentenced to prison and their property was confiscated on charges of »economic sabotage«. Their family members were also arrested, but later released, and they were allowed to take some household goods with them when they left the village. All their other movable and immovable property was transferred to the collective farm.[49]

Charges of economic sabotage were another form of pressure. In Székelypetőfalva, the organizers were quite inventive with regards to this method, as a farmer who also worked as a carpenter was put on trial for »improper transport and sales (of goods, added by L.M.),« and a threshing machine owner was charged for not finishing the repairs on his machine on time. There were also

44 ANR-SAIC, CC-Agr. 79/1950, 3, 5, 144, 152.
45 ANR-SJCov, PCR Com. Jud. Trei Scaune 37/1950, 20.
46 ANR-SAIC, CC-Agr. 79/1950, 60, 64–65, 73–74.
47 ANR-SAIC, CC-Agr. 79/1950, 2–3, 104.
48 ANR-SAIC, CC-Agr. 65/1950, 257–59.
49 ANR-SAIC, CC-Agr. 65/1950, 262, 266; 79/1950, 60, 65, 74. ANR-SJCov, PCR Com. Rai.Tg.Sec. 4/1950, 185.

threats with weapons and arrests by the Securitate.[50] At least two properties were confiscated in this village for the collective farm.[51] In certain places, promises (such as reduced deliveries) were used together with pressure tactics (impossible transportation duties) and intimidation (the Militia taking resisting farmers to the town hall) to enroll farmers. This was the case in Hatolyka, for example.[52] Here, the owner of the house selected as the collective farm's headquarters was imprisoned, and his property was confiscated.[53] Another place where both incentive and pressure tactics were used is Dálnok.[54]

Pressure, intimidation, and violence were the preferred methods in Gidófalva: here, a farmer was beaten multiple times by the Securitate, presumably for resisting collectivization. The secret police took away another farmer, and when he was released, he enrolled in the collective farm.[55] Families living in the house selected for the collective farm's headquarters were likely threatened, as they left the village, taking with them only a few pieces of furniture and some clothes. Their remaining property (animals, land, house, and agricultural equipment) was taken over by the collective farm without any court verdict or legal proceedings.[56]

Nagyajta is one of the places for which we have little data concerning the organization. However, an incident that occurred during the inauguration sheds some light on the local organization. On July 23, 1950, during the official inauguration, a farmer who had signed the collective farm establishment records spoke out and shared his enrollment story with the gathering. After the activists failed to convince him, the Securitate took him, and he was held captive for two days. Once released, he signed the enrollment form. He then turned to the attending county party secretary and said, »Look, I'm signing because I'm a good citizen, the kind that follows the laws and doesn't want to rot in prison.«[57]

Hard and forced physical labor was also a method, for example, in Zalán. Here, the ones who resisted were subjected to hard physical labor (stone carrying and wood hauling).[58] But resistors were also threatened with forced labor in Mikóujfalu.[59] In Maksa, the local party organizer came into conflict with the local Reformed pastor, who opposed collectivization. Intimidation was used here as well (threats with weapons and involvement of the Securitate during the

50 ANR-SJMș, S 1660, 43. ANR-SAIC, CC-Agr. 79/1950, 42, 79, 126.
51 ANR-SAIC, CC-Agr. 65/1950, 262, 268–69; 79/1950, 43.
52 ANR-SAIC, CC-Agr. 79/1950, 63. ANR-SJCov, PCR Com. Rai. Tg.Sec. 4/1950, 255, 283, 289.
53 ANR-SAIC, CC-Agr. 65/1950, 268; 79/1950, 60.
54 ANR-SJCov, PCR Com. Rai.Tg.Sec. 4/1950, 196. ANR-SAIC, CC-Agr. 79/1950, 60–61, 63.
55 ANR-SJCov, PCR Com. Jud. Trei Scaune 43/1950, 23. Balogh, Történelem, 53.
56 ANR-SAIC, CC-Agr. 79/1950, 16, 270.
57 Cătănuș and Roske, *Colectivizarea*, 193.
58 ANR-SAIC, CC-Agr. 66/1950, 51; 79/1950, 90.
59 ANR-SAIC, CC-Agr. 79/1950, 4, 145.

organization). Farmers who were categorized as *kulaks* were also enrolled in the collective farm, only to be excluded later. Consequently, intimidation was used to force them to sign the enrollment forms.[60] To secure the necessary property, two farmers were also imprisoned here, and their families were relocated out of the village.[61] In Papolc, pressure tactics were used (impossible transportation duties, threats of expulsion from school). To get people to sign the land exchange records, the Militia took them to the town hall at night, where they were humiliated: one farmer was made to stand against a wall to »think«, another was forced to stand on one foot as punishment, and another was spat on. We also have information about Securitate's involvement: one farmer was held in custody at their headquarters for four days, and another was held for three days at the Militia station. Three families had their properties confiscated to make way for the collective farm's headquarters.[62]

In certain places, the Militia was the only way to get people to enroll. This was the case in Szentkatolna, where organizers also applied the method of blackmail with double declarations. There are also reports of threats of physical punishment: a Securitate officer threatened a farmer's wife with beating, but she still refused to sign the enrollment form.

Through violent methods, 21 collective farms were formed in the county between July and August, and enrollment forms were collected from three other villages. Of the 24 collective farms thus established, 21 were inaugurated, and they had a total of 2,950 members (families), 9,331 ha of arable land, and 2,840 ha of meadows.[63]

However, due to violent collectivization, tensions grew in rural society, and anti-collectivization movements erupted one after another. In Sepsikilyén, protests against collectivization took place on July 24–25, 1950, and/or on August 1.[64] In Réty, protests began on August 18 or 25, following a visit from a Bucharest party instructor, who told the locals that joining the collective was voluntary and that the use of force was prohibited.[65] In Mikóújfalu, a protest began on August 27, and the demonstrators' anger quickly turned against the party activists responsible for organizing the collectivization. They were threatened, a scuffle broke out, and the activists were chased out of the village. The protest lasted for five days, during which several demonstrations took place. The locals set up guard at the village entrance, where most of the men slept overnight, while the women stood in the streets and

60 Benkő, Minden, 117–18. ANR-SAIC, CC-Agr. 79/1950, 43, 104–06.
61 ANR-SAIC, CC-Agr. 65/1950, 258.
62 ANR-SAIC, CC-Agr. 65/1950, 263. 79/1950, 78, 123–24, 159. ANR-SJCov, PCR Com. Rai.Tg.Sec. 3/1950, 109, 112.
63 ANR-SAIC, CC-Agr. 79/1950, 15. ANR-SJCov, PCR Com. Rai.Tg.Sec. 4/1950, 241.
64 ANR-SJCov, Com. Jud. Trei Scaune 41/1950, 8, 25. RNL-ANR-SAIC, CC-Agr. 79/1950, 19.
65 ANR-SAIC, CC-Agr. 79/1950, 18–19. ANR-SJCov, PCR Com. Jud. Trei Scaune 46/1950, 4, 28.

yards. The sources are inconclusive regarding the events following the protests: one source claims that there was no retaliation, only investigations were carried out. At the same time, another mentions the intervention of the Militia.

It can be seen as the continuation of the movements, as on the evening of October 5, a resident went to Bucharest, claiming to arrange their exit from the collective farm.[66] On August 27 in Papolc, dissatisfaction with the collective farm emerged during a meeting, and soon turned into a protest on August 29: locals shouted anti-collectivization slogans. They threw stones at a party activist who was riding his motorcycle out of the village. The next day, he returned to the village escorted by the Securitate. The secret police arrested one person and held them for several days. After this, there were no further reports of protests until September, when the villagers learned that other communities were also demanding the dissolution of the collective farms. This sparked another anti-collectivization protest here.[67] Another incident occurred in Étfalvazoltán on September 5, involving a party organizer and a local woman. The news spread through the village, and a crowd gathered. In a spontaneous meeting, the party organizer was slapped and told to leave the village within 24 hours. The gathered people protested against collectivization, and at night, a person stood guard by the church to ring the bells if the Militia arrived in the village. The next day, the villagers wanted to continue protesting, but the Militia, which had arrived in the meantime, prevented them from doing so.[68]

Two days later, on September 7, an anti-collectivization protest took place in Zalán.[69] During the following days, starting on September 9 or 10, anti-collectivization protests also took place in Dálnok, lasting a day or two.[70] In Kézdimartonfalva, a three-day protest broke out on September 13 or 14. The protesters went to the town hall, where they shouted anti-collective slogans, demanded individual planting plans, and the return of seeds they had submitted. The protesters broke into the town hall, where a scuffle occurred, and the village leader was assaulted. On September 16–17, the Militia intervened and ended the protest.[71] In Hatolyka, on September 14, state tractor drivers attempted to plow the land of the collective farm that had been taken from the farmers, but the locals chased them away. The villagers began protesting against collectivization, forcing one of the collective farm organizers to leave the village.[72] Participants decided

66 ANR-SAIC, CC-Agr. 79/1950, 19–20, 211. ANR-SJCov, PCR Com. Jud. Trei Scaune 44/1950 2, 37.
67 ANR-SAIC, CC-Agr. 79/1950, 78, 125. ANR-SJCov, PCR Com. Rai. Tg.Sec. 3/1950, 105. ANR-SJMș, S 1620, 43–46.
68 ANR-SJCov, PCR Com. Rai. Tg.Sec. 3/1950, 4, 14, 21, 38–39.
69 ANR-SJCov, PCR Com. Rai. Tg.Sec. 3/1950, 1.
70 ANR-SJCov, PCR Com. Jud. Trei Scaune 48/1950, p. 275. PCR Com. Rai. Tg.Sec. 1/1950, 64.
71 ANR-SJCov, PCR Com. Rai. Tg.Sec. 3/1950, 14, 31–33, 36–37, 44, 64; 4/1950, p. 5.
72 ANR-SJCov, PCR Com. Rai. Tg.Sec. 4/1950, 25–256, 269, 275, 282.

to dissolve the collective farm and documented the decision in a protocol, which was subsequently signed. At the same time, several individuals also prepared their withdrawal statements. The protocol was intended to be sent to Bucharest by a delegation, and they collected money for their travel expenses. According to one source, the protocol was sent to Bucharest, while another claims it was taken to Kézdivásárhely. The protest lasted at least until September 18.[73]

Meanwhile, on September 17 in Angyalos, a crowd gathered in front of the town hall, demanding the dissolution of the collective farm, the distribution of seeds, and the re-surveying of the previously consolidated land. Afterward, they broke into the town hall and held a meeting. In a statement, they declared that they did not want to be part of a collective farm. This was documented and signed by the village residents. They ransacked the collective farm's archives and destroyed the enrollment forms.[74] After this, the protesters went to the collective farm leader's house and forced the family to leave the village.[75] At the same time, some of the protesters demanded the release of the wealthier peasants who had been deported from the village. At the end of the protest, the warehouse worker of the collective farm returned the seeds that had been collected for the collective farm. The next day, on September 18, the locals tore down the sign at the collective farm's gate and cut the gate open.[76] At the end of the protest, the warehouse worker of the collective farm returned the seeds that had been collected for the collective farm.[77]

It was during these days that, in Székelypetőfalva – on the evening of September 17 – anti-collectivization protesters gathered at the village's stone cross, under the light of a torch, and then held a meeting at the town hall. During the meeting, a local resident confronted the head of local administration, asking why he had been taken by the Securitate and suffered innocently just because he refused to join the collective farm. He even tried to attack him, but the others prevented the situation from escalating into violence. The protesters then recorded in a protocol that they did not need the collective farm, and they wanted to work freely. They also demanded the release of two local farmers who, after having been classified as *kulaks*, had been arrested and taken away during the organization of the collective farm. The protocol was brought to Bucharest the next day by a delegation to be presented to the government. The following days remained tense.[78]

73 ANR-SJCov, PCR Com. Rai. Tg.Sec. 4/1950 250–83; 1/1950, 65.
74 ANR-SAIC, CC-Agr. 39/1950 48–49. ANR-SJCov, PCR Com. Jud. Trei Scaune 36/1950, 6–11, 17, 25.
75 ANR-SAIC, CC-Agr. 39/1950, 48–49.
76 ANR-SAIC, CC-Agr. 39/1950, 48–49. ANR-SJCov, PCR Com. Jud. Trei Scaune 36/1950, 2–39.
77 ANR-SJCov, PCR Com. Jud. Trei Scaune 36/1950, 2.
78 ANR-SAIC, CC-Agr. 39/1950, f. 41–42. ANR-SJCov, PCR Com. Rai. Tg.Sec. 3/1950, 2, 24.

In Maksa, anti-collectivization protests took place from September 17 to 19, during which time a local party organizer fled from the locals who were searching for him. Another event also took place in the village, one that remains unclear to this day: a declaration was made stating that the village of Maksa would become an independent republic from Romania, with which it would only maintain commercial relations.[79] On September 17, an anti-collectivization protest began in Lemhény. On September 18, another protest started in Dálnok, when villagers attempted to plow the collectivized land taken from the farmers at the village border. The gathered crowd threatened the tractor drivers with violence, began protesting against collectivization, and held a meeting, where they declared the dissolution of the collective farm. They also documented this decision in a protocol and informed the higher authorities by phone.[80]

Meanwhile, on September 18 or 19, a protest also began in Gidófalva. The protesters painted over the slogans encouraging the establishment of the collective farm, destroyed caricatures mocking the *kulaks*, and removed the collective farm's sign together with the five-pointed star symbol. They also broke into the town hall, where they passed a resolution to dissolve the collective farm. The document was sent to the administrative center in Sepsiszentgyörgy by a three-person delegation. The participants burned the enrollment forms and distributed the collected seeds. During the protest, the local militiaman was also forced by the protesters to call the Sepsiszentgyörgy Militia or party center. The villagers set up guard to prevent anyone from being taken from the village, as they had seen several strangers in the area, including Securitate officers. One of them was captured and locked in the town hall, but he managed to escape. To prevent news from being sent out of the village, the locals cut the telephone wires and[81] broke into the town hall, where they passed a resolution to dissolve the collective farm. The document was sent to the administrative center in Sepsiszentgyörgy by a three-person delegation. The participants burned the enrollment forms and distributed the collected seeds. During the protest, the local militiaman was also forced by the protesters to call the Sepsiszentgyörgy Militia or party center.[82]

In Sepsikőröspatak, anti-collectivization protests started on the evening of September 19 and continued the following day. The protesters broke into the town hall, seized the collective farm's documents, distributed the enrollment

79 Cătănuş and Roske, *Colectivizarea*, 178. és ANR-SAIC, CC-Agr. 74/1950, 9; 39/1950, 43, 49.

80 ANR-SJCov, PCR Com. Jud. Trei Scaune 48/1950, 202, 204, 207, 213–15. PCR Com. Rai.Tg.Sec. 4/1950, f. 202–16; ANR-SAIC, CC-Agr. 39/1950, 27, 42.

81 ANR-SJCov, PCR Com. Jud. Trei Scaune 43/1950, 3–4, 18–20, 34–35, 40, 47, 54. ANR-SAIC, CC-Agr. 39/1950, 49. Balogh, *Történelem*, 58.

82 ANR-SJCov, PCR Com. Jud. Trei Scaune 43/1950, 40–47.

forms, then tore and burned them, and also collected signatures for the dissolution of the collective farm.[83] In Sepsiárkos, the protest began on September 20, and the primary goal of the participants was to obtain the registration forms. They ransacked the homes of locals involved in the collectivization process, and when a Militia member intervened, they threw objects at him and chased him away.[84] The protest continued the next day. The protesters contacted the county party committee by phone to announce the dissolution of the collective farm, then they knocked down telephone poles and burned the collective farm documents. The protesters were preparing for the intervention of security forces.[85] In Kálnok, the protest also began on September 20. Afterwards, the participants damaged the homes of local communist party leaders and searched for collective farm documents. The next day, they obtained the registration forms, which they distributed and likely destroyed. Later, they also distributed the seeds collected for the collective farm.[86] In Komolló, on the evening of September 20, some locals held a brief meeting on the football field near the village, where they decided to act against collectivization. They then started protesting in the village and chased away the party organizer overseeing collectivization. They also distributed the seeds that had already been collected for the collective farm.[87] On September 21, a new protest began in Zalán. The protesters broke into the town hall and searched for the collective farm documents, which they then burned. They also threatened the party organizers and even ransacked one of their houses. The protesters also threatened the militiamen who arrived in the village, and according to some sources, they even attacked them. One source states that the protesters sent a 16-member delegation to the administrative center in Sepsiszentgyörgy to demand the dissolution of the collective farm.[88]

Repression and Deportations Following the Protests

On the night of September 22 to 23, security forces struck those villages where anti-collectivization movements had occurred, and they arrested those farmers qualified as *kulaks* who were considered to be the instigators of the protests, whether or not they had participated in the events. The selected villages were surrounded by armed security forces (military, Militia, Securitate), which

83 ANR-SJCov, PCR Com. Jud. Trei Scaune 47/1950, 12–13, 22, 31, 43–44, 55.
84 ANR-SJCov, Comitetul Raional PCR Sfântu Gheorghe 4/1950, 11.
85 ANR-SJCov, PCR Com. Jud. Trei Scaune 37/1950, 8–9, 14, 21, 27–28, 31, 38–39, 44–45, 50.
86 ANR-SJCov, PCR Com. Jud. Trei Scaune 39/1950, 6, 9, 15, 19, 30, 41. Comitetul Raional PCR Sfântu Gheorghe 4/1950, 12.
87 ANR-SJCov, PCR Com. Jud. Trei Scaune 42/1950, 3, 4, 6, 14, 18, 43.
88 ANR-SJCov, PCR Com. Rai.Tg.Sec. 3/1950, 12. PCR Com. Jud. Trei Scaune 48/1950, 6–30.

then entered the villages, loaded the targeted families onto trucks, and took them away. In several settlements, when the approaching security forces were noticed, the bells were rung, and the locals gathered to try and drive away the intruders with hand tools, to which the forces responded with gunfire. To date, we know of 12 settlements that were affected by the security forces' intervention: Sepsiárkos, Gidófalva, Székelypetőfalva, Kézdimárkosfalva, Maksa, Lécfalva, Dálnok, Angyalos, Hatolyka, Zalán, Komolló, and Székelypetőfalva. A family from Sepsiszentgyörgy was also deported.

During the clashes, fatalities occurred in two settlements: in Gidófalva, where several people were injured by gunfire, two individuals, András Zsigmond and Vilmos Jancsó, died; in Maksa, two people, Andrásné Fazakas (Gizella Soós) and Györgyné Sorbán (Berta Zöldi), died from gunshot wounds.[89] The detainees were taken to the Brașov railway station, where some of them were loaded into freight cars and sent to Dobruja. Those considered instigators were forwarded to the Brașov fortress, the Securitate detention facility. During the winter, female prisoners were transferred from the fortress to the Brașov city prison, where conditions were more favorable. Between February and March 1951, some prisoners were sentenced by the Brașov Military Court, others remained in »administrative« (no trial) detention, and some were released. In March 1951, both male prisoners from the fortress and female prisoners from the city prison were taken to the Brașov train station, where they were placed in freight cars and transported to Dobruja. There, they were assigned to various villages (Ovidiu, Cașimcea, Cocoș, Hamangia, Lunca) and became employees of state farms.[90]

89 Benkő, Minden, 114–18.
90 Balogh, *Történelem*, 109. Bende, *Zord idők sodrásában*, 110–17.

Table 4: Deported families in the Háromszék County in 1950

Settlement	Families deported on September 23, 1950[91]	Families were deported at an unknown time[92]
Gidófalva	6	5 (23 persons)
Angyalos	7	3 (11 persons)
Maksa	6	9 (20 persons)
Lécfalva	8	8 (23 persons)
Kézdimárkosfalva	3	1 (4 persons)
Hatolyka	4	2 (6 persons)
Zalán	-	3 (7 persons)
Dálnok	-	3–4 (15–18 persons)
Sepsiszentgyörgy	-	1 (4 persons)
Komolló	-	1 (3 persons)
Sepsiárkos	-	1 (2 persons)
Székelypetőfalva	-	6 (20 persons)
Total	34	43–44 (138–141 persons)

Source: ANR-SJMş, S 1558, 9–13

Interestingly, according to one source, even after the reprisals, there was a protest in Fotosmartonos: in this settlement, the inauguration of the collective farm had already been prepared, but on September 28, 1950, the residents protested against the collective farm, broke into the town hall, tore up the registration forms, and demanded the release of a local person who had been taken into custody.[93]

CONCLUSION

In Háromszék County, during the collectivization that began in 1949, the organization proceeded relatively cautiously until the following year. From mid-June, the county's collectivization entered a new phase, marked by mass and violent organization, in several places, with the use of pressure and violent methods. Starting in July, the use of violent methods extended to other administrative units as well. Thus, in July and August, 21 collective farms were established, and enrollment forms were collected from three others. Of the 24 collective farms

91 The document mentions September 28, 1948, in every instance, but this is most likely a misprint – it refers to September 23, 1950, because they are referred to as members of the collective farm – ANR-SAIC, CC-Agr. 65/1950, 269–70. According to the recollections, it happened on September 22 – Balogh, *Történelem*, 96; ANR-SAIC, CC-Agr. 65/1950, 269–70.

92 ANR-SJMş, S 1558, 9–12.

93 ANR-SAIC, CC-Agr. 65/1950, 267.

created, 21 were inaugurated, with nearly 3,000 members (families) and almost 10,000 hectares of arable land.[94] As a result of the violent implementation of the organization, anti-collectivization protests broke out in 18 settlements, lasting for nearly a month. The authorities eventually launched a central action on the night between September 22 and 23, 1950, and deported the farmers who were considered the instigators of the protests, along with their families. In several places, clashes occurred between the security forces and the locals, who tried to prevent the deportation of the farmers. There were fatalities during these clashes: in Gidófalva and Maksa each, the authorities shot two locals, and 34-44 families, about 140 people in total, were deported. The deported were sent to southern Romania, Dobruja – some of them right away, while others later, in March 1951. Here, forced settlements were designated for them. Only a few were released or sentenced to prison.

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ANR-SJCov PCR Com. Rai.Tg.Sec – Serviciul Județean Covasna (Romania, Sfântu Gheorghe/Sepsiszentgyörgy), Comitetul Raional PCR Târgu Secuiesc.

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94 ANR-SAIC, CC-Agr. 79/1950, 15.

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Motifs from the Savinja Valley, Slovenia, 1957.

Photo: Miloš Švabić, courtesy of: Museum of Contemporary History of Slovenia.

PRIVATE AND COLLECTIVE

Dániel Luka

Developing Land Rights? The Long Way of Creating Cooperative Land Ownership in Hungary

INTRODUCTION

The Soviet-type collectivization began in Hungary in 1948. Agricultural producer cooperatives were organized, and people were forced to join collective farms.[1] This process had special economic and social complexity in the Hungarian countryside. How did land legislation develop during Stalinization and De-Stalinization? This study examines a lengthy legislative process spanning the 1950s through the 1960s, culminating in the enactment of Law No. 4 in 1967. The Land Act of 1967 allowed cooperatives to acquire ownership of arable land. This »development« was part of cooperative legislation, which linked land issues to economic reforms. On the one hand, the regime had to overcome ideological limits of the system; on the other hand, there was pure political necessity and

1 Three types of cooperatives existed; the third was considered the most advanced socialist farm in the communist dictatorship. Despite the grade of collective work, even in this kind of cooperative, it was not possible to own arable land commonly until 1967. I refer to these collective farms in the paper generally as cooperative, noting that they were neither the result of peasant self-organization nor the pure copies of the Soviet kolkhozes.

economic need to solve the so-called land question. The new regulation served cooperative interests and gradually abolished private ownership of land. The implementation of the Land Act transformed land relations and created a new, standard form of land ownership, rather than nationalization of land.

While most works on agricultural history address land issues in communist dictatorships, the process of drafting a land code before, during, and after mass collectivization is almost absent from the Hungarian literature. For instance, land consolidations, expropriations, and the misuse of commonly used lands are generally elaborated to highlight the violent and arbitrary conduct of authorities, especially between 1949 and 1956.[2] Scientific historical writings on main land policy are rare; however, this topic should be taken into account to uncover changes in privately and collectively owned and used lands.[3] Why did the Communist Party not initiate the preparation of a land code in the first years of communist rule, and only begin during the »New Course«, a brief period between 1953 and 1955 under Imre Nagy, aimed at easing repression and introducing moderate reforms? What aspects did the legislators consider during the codification process?

The primary sources of my analysis are documents of central party organs and ministries. For instance, I conducted research on reports from the Ministry of Agriculture, the Political Committee of the Communist Party, and various agricultural organs. The evaluation provides explanations and reveals connections between elements of land legislation and land policy up until the Hungarian economic reform in the second half of the 1960s.

LAND REDISTRIBUTION, COMMUNIST LAND POLICY AND COLLECTIVIZATION, 1945–1953

The land reform decree came into force in Hungary in March 1945. It was one of the most significant land regulations at the end of the Second World War and in the years that followed. After the announcement of the Soviet-type collectivization of agriculture, the »land reform« was declared completed in 1949 in legal terms. Still, the abolition of its results lasted for more than a decade.

2 Simon, A párt agrárpolitikája, 26–27. Honvári, Magyarország gazdasági fejlődése, 538–41. Szakács, A földosztástól, 287–97, 330–35. József Pál mentioned the 1957 legislation in one of his writings, while later the authors usually summarized the Land Act of 1967, mainly due to the creation of cooperative land ownership – Pál, Kísérlet szövetkezeti törvény, 225–38. On land consolidations see: Nádasdi, *Tagosítások és birtokrendezések*. On land transfer between 1946 and 1949: Simon, *A magyar parasztság*, 170–73. Most of the works on agriculture after 1945 has a chapter on land reform, however, the analyzes usually do not cover the fate of land reform lands in detail. See, e.g., Donáth, *Demokratikus földreform*; Ö. Kovács, Földindulás, 19–68.

3 See, e.g., Seres, Földtulajdoni és földhasználati, 163–69; Sipos, A hazai földtulajdoni, 493–509; Romány, Földbirtok-politika és földtulajdon, 96–105; Kurucz, Gondolattöredékek a magyar, 219–64.

The goal of the legislators and decision-makers was the radical transformation of land structure by limiting and eliminating private land use and ownership. The leading figure of the Bulgarian communists, Georgi Dimitrov, explained in 1948 that, unlike the Soviet pattern, mass collectivization can be accomplished in the so-called people's democracies without prior nationalization of lands. His thesis had a significant influence on other communist regimes in the region.

Hungary did not have a land act until 1967. Law No. 4 on further developing land ownership and land use, which was published in the Hungarian Gazette on October 11, 1967, was clearly seen as Land Act in the party and in the public as well. What led to this legal measure? In the first years of the Rákosi-era[4] up until the start of the »New Course«, the question of codification of private and/or »socialist« land relations was not raised. As a result, in the first years of collectivization, there was no intention to create a general or partial land code.

CODIFICATION ATTEMPTS OF COOPERATIVE LAW AND LAND LAW, 1953–1963

Law was one of the primary instruments of social and economic change, which began in 1945. By 1950, the Soviet legal system had become a model to be followed by Hungarian legal theorists; however, many peculiarities influenced legal thinking. Significant codifications were in progress before 1953; nevertheless, the most important effect of the »New Course« was that the preparation of a new civil code began. The opinions differed between jurists and economists on the necessary economic and legal measures during the so-called transition period from capitalism to socialism. This is evident in the example of the NEP (named after the Soviet New Economic Policy of the 1920s), as well as in debates on land law and cooperative law.[5]

A proposal for securing the proper cultivation of state reserve lands was prepared in the spring of 1953 in the Department of Agriculture of the Hungarian Workers' Party (MDP), which addressed relevant questions of land law. Shortly, the Political Committee accepted the proposal on July 29, 1953. The content concentrated on the utilization of reserve lands, specifically at that time. The decree of the Council of Ministers on this matter was published on August 2, and the

4 The period of Mátyás Rákosi's rule in Hungary (1948/1949–1953) was marked by severe repression across political, economic, and cultural spheres, along with forced collectivization, accelerated industrialization, and rigid Soviet-style central planning. Although Rákosi briefly regained power between 1955 and 1956, the process of de-Stalinization continued following his exile to the Soviet Union in the summer of 1956.

5 Luka, A Contradictory Transition, 525–43.

implementing decree was published on August 20. On September 9, a decree also came into force regarding the leasing of private lands. These laws were intended to ensure the efficient utilization of arable areas, but they did not address many issues related to land ownership and use. The party leadership planned in the »New Course« a much longer economic transition from capitalism to socialism than the Stalinist party elite. This was possibly one of the reasons that the Department of Agriculture of the MDP proposed on August 6, 1953, in its draft working plan for autumn 1953, the idea of a general land code.[6]

In November 1953, a decision was made to establish governmental committees to codify civil law and criminal law.[7] The committees held meetings from the beginning of 1954; a special committee was preparing the general land code within the Ministry of Justice.[8] This committee held meetings on an irregular basis, probably until the spring of 1955. The archival sources do not indicate that a special committee was formed to codify producer cooperative law. The conception of lawmakers was simple: basic land rights and cooperative law would be regulated in parallel with the codification of civil law. At the meeting of the Political Committee on August 18, 1954, it was decided that there was no need for a separate cooperative act, since the Civil Code would regulate the operation of cooperatives in more detail, while the Land Code would regulate the use of land by cooperatives.[9] The Stalinists' restoration of political power in 1955 paused the codification of land law.[10]

In 1956, the party decided that cooperatives could have more flexibility in developing their charters. It was planned to draft a new cooperative law.[11] A memorandum, prepared in September 1956, mentioned a new codification committee for land law and producer cooperative law, which was set to resume work in the autumn of 1956.[12] The new general cooperative law, which would have partly included the legal material on producer cooperatives, was drafted by the autumn of 1957. József Pál, who had been involved in cooperative legislation and policy-

6 HU MNL OL M-KS 276. f. 93. cs. 444. ő. e., Department of Agriculture, strictly confidential draft of the working plan until November 1, 1953, August 6, 1953.

7 *Nagy Imre első kormányának,* 748–51.

8 HU MNL OL XIX-K-16-a 42. ő. e. No. 9.640-8/1954, Draft of the system (thematic) of the Land Law Act, May 19, 1954.

9 HU MNL OL M-KS 276. f. 53. cs. 190. ő. e., Minutes of the meeting of August 18, 1954; 5. Proposal for certain principle questions on the civil code, land code, and criminal code; Administrative Department of the Ministry of Justice, No. K/11/E/542/1954, Strictly confidential proposal for the Political Committee on certain principle questions on the civil code, land code, and criminal code, August 16, 1954.

10 Although it is possible that the decision-makers planned later to issue a land act according to political decisions.

11 The actual one, which was in force, was promulgated in 1947 (Law No. 11 on cooperatives).

12 HU MNL OL Deputy of the President of the Council of Ministers Antal Apró (1952–1973) 4. ő. e. No. 452/VIII/1956, Memorandum for comrade Antal Apró, September 26, 1956.

making for over a decade, wrote an overview of this legislative process, which was published in the Agricultural History Review in 1997.[13] Zsuzsanna Varga, who has written articles and books on the Hungarian agricultural reforms, also referred to this legislative attempt in her work.[14]

The revolution and freedom fight in 1956, as well as the subsequent events, intensified discussions over legislative matters; additionally, changes in agricultural policy had a profound impact on legislation.[15] The legislative process, which restarted in 1956, resulted in a general cooperative act and a cooperative land act, based partly on the previous drafts of a general land code.[16] After the general cooperative act had been removed from the agenda in 1957, the decree on agricultural cooperatives would have included land rights regulation. In 1958, it was planned that some of these land rights should be regulated separately in the form of a decree of the Presidential Council.[17] Finally, in 1959, in the first phase of mass collectivization, a decree on agricultural cooperatives was published. Authors often referred to this decree in the literature as a cooperative act.[18]

The Cooperative Land Act, drafted in 1957, would have codified the cooperative part of agricultural land law separately. At that time, two jurists were explicitly involved in land law issues and participated in legislation: Imre Seres and László Nagy.[19] In the 1950s, the »New Course« and the post-revolutionary period's land policy changes had a significant impact on regulations that were included in drafts and subsequently published in legal provisions. The legislation process suggests that there has been a shift from a dogmatic, rigid approach towards a »reformist« approach, emphasizing gradualism and facilitating the use of softer methods. Lands were taken into state ownership during Stalinization for the use of state farms and cooperatives. After a limited-scale land compensation of former owners and tenants, the remaining lands which were taken various ways by 1957 were nationalized without any compensation. According to

13 Pál, Kísérlet szövetkezeti törvény, 225–38.

14 Varga, *The Hungarian Agricultural Miracle?*.

15 An overview of collectivization in Hungary and especially the role of household plots, see: Kovach, Hungary: Cooperative Farms, 125–52; Szakács, Agrarian Policy in Hungary, 67–78.

16 HU MNL OL XIX-K-1-y 1479. ő. e. No. 153.834/1957, Thematic draft of the Cooperative Land Act, May 27, 1957.

17 HU MNL OL XIX-E-1-z 98. ő. e., Decree No. … of 1958 of the People's Republic Presidential Council on certain land law questions related to cooperatives, December 1958.

18 *Hungarian Gazette* 1959; No. 29, Decree No. 7 of 1959 of the People's Republic Presidential Council on the agricultural producer cooperatives and cooperative groups, March 19, 1959.

19 Imre Seres (1928–1983) jurist, legal scholar, and expert on cooperative ownership rights. Finished legal studies in 1952 in Budapest at the Eötvös Loránd University, aspirant at the Lomonosov Moscow State University between 1954 and 1956. He wrote his dissertation about land ownership in the Hungarian producer cooperatives. László Nagy (1914–2005) was a jurist and legal scholar. Associate professor at the University of Szeged from 1957, then head of the Department of Agricultural and Labor Law as a professor from April 1958.

cooperative rules, commonly used private lands could be taken back legally by private farmers, heirs or quitting cooperative members.

The Hungarian agriculture was mass collectivized between 1959 and 1961, which made it necessary to »adjust« the legal framework to large-scale farming. A comprehensive legislation began in 1961, with plans to draft a new act on producer cooperatives and a land code.[20] The Ministry of Agriculture entrusted Imre Seres with the task of drafting a land code to regulate land ownership and use generally. Both this draft and the forthcoming act on producer cooperatives would have allowed cooperatives to acquire arable land. It can be assumed that when the new act on producer cooperatives is promulgated, either later or simultaneously, a general land code will come into force.[21] The new act on producer cooperatives was then removed from the agenda for a while, only to be brought back to the forefront in the mid-1960s, along with a complex economic reform. Numerous questions remained unanswered at that time, mainly related to land use issues, which were the subject of legislative problems – for instance, readjustments of arable land between state farms and cooperatives, or the use of allotted lands.[22] Ongoing »spatial readjustments« have also included various types of cultivated lands, such as orchards, vineyards, and forests. These land consolidations, barely analyzed from new perspectives in the Hungarian literature, continued the »socialization of land use«.

Consolidation of fragmented small parcels into large fields was facilitated by legislation. It is hard to estimate the overall farmland area affected by this procedure in the 1960s. In the first half of that decade, two huge, nationwide programs were initiated and partially implemented. First, readjustment/reallocation of forest areas, second, review and readjustment of building areas, including household plots and backyard areas. In addition, land was taken over by the state in various ways, such as the confiscation of land redistributed during land reform.

20 Some of the jurists believed that due to mass collectivization, both producer cooperative law and land law became independent branches of law. This could also be one of the reasons why the codification of both was on the agenda.

21 HU MNL OL XIX-K-1-b 579. ő. e. No. 2.442/1963, Issuing frame provisions related to various branches of agriculture; Secretariat of the Ministry of Agriculture, Department of Administration, comments regarding the Land Act draft, February 1, 1963; Ministry of Agriculture, Department of Administration, memorandum on the Land Act Draft, February 21, 1963.

22 HU MNL OL XIX-K-1-y 1518. ő. e. No. 44.204/1962, Strictly confidential proposal on certain land policy issues; Proposal for the Agricultural Commission of the MSZMP on certain land use issues, January 19, 1962.

PEASANT DEMANDS AND COOPERATIVE INTERESTS

The lands taken into collective use by cooperatives were indivisible after consolidation and demarcation. However, the more people who entered the collective farm with land, the more people could leave after the three-year exit ban had expired. It was a real risk for the cooperatives, i.e., that cooperative members could reclaim land for private use. Theoretically, it was possible to leave the cooperatives formed in 1948 as early as autumn 1951. At the end of 1952 and the beginning of 1953, cooperatives and state organs were instructed not to return land from cooperative fields to private use.[23] Keeping collective lands intact was also an important factor in the »New Course« and the implementation of post-revolutionary land compensation. Land compensation restrictions have probably been advocated mainly by radical party cadres who agitated for collectivization. The prohibition of releasing land from collective use came to the fore during the Rákosi power restoration in 1955. Agricultural policy-makers faced the phenomenon of land demands from both non-cooperative and cooperative members since 1951/52. This socio-economic development also had a tremendous influence on land policy.[24]

State organs and cooperatives prevented peasants from reclaiming land for individual use during the mass collectivization. The official grounds for rejection were the common interests of cooperatives. Such decisions, which contradicted the law, involved judicial authorities, courts, prosecutors' offices, and county representatives of the cooperative councils. Cooperative leaders were instructed verbally at the meeting and in writing about the prohibition on land release.[25] The land issues related to the aforementioned problems resurfaced as a central topic in the early 1960s, following the expiration of the three-year exit ban in 1962, which had been implemented after the start of mass collectivization in 1959.[26] Preventing cooperative members from leaving, rejecting the heir's request for

23 HU MNL GyMSVMSL XXIII. 211. 11. cs. 3. ő. e., Ministry of Agriculture, settling the issue of land demands of cooperative members who have been excluded or quit, January 5, 1953.

24 HU MNL OL M-KS 276. f. 93. cs. 654. ő. e., Memorandum on leaving cooperative members in Győr-Sopron County Cooperatives, September 24, 1956; Strictly confidential report for the Political Committee on the leaving cooperative members in Vas, Győr, Zala, Somogy, and Baranya counties, September 27, 1956.

25 HU MNL GyMSVMGyL XXIII. 9.a 36. ő. e. No. 21.157/1961, Győr County Court, procedure regarding the inheritance of cooperative members, June 14, 1961. HU MNL GyMSMSL XXIII. 211. 3. ő. e. No. 4097-1/1961, Instructions of the Department of Agriculture of the Executive Committee of Csorna District Council for the president of the cooperative in Bősárkány about the prohibition of quitting and taking over land from cooperatives, December 21, 1961. According to the Civil Code and the cooperative decree of 1959, reclaiming land for private use was linked to the agricultural profession. The implementation of this regulation significantly limited further private farming.

26 Varga, »Földindulás« után, 250–55.

land, and preventing the lessor's attempts to break the contract seemed to be a temporary solution from the party state perspective.[27]

Law was subordinated to the interests of the cooperatives. Nevertheless, this situation could have led to instability of collective land use. The agrarian reformers could not stand idly by and watch the chain reaction unfold at any time. It would have meant the risk of a cooperative break up. In this case, the agricultural reform would also have been stalled on the path that could have proved the success of reform concepts. When the act on producer cooperatives was prepared in the 1960s, there were no new elements in terms of land release from collective fields.[28] Analyzes of Imre Seres and sources from the Agricultural Department of the Central Committee of the MSZMP written and prepared in the first half of the 1960s, indicate that decision-makers considered the creation of cooperative land ownership. This type of ownership was considered a solution to the aforementioned problems.

THE NEW ACT ON PRODUCER COOPERATIVES AND LAND LAW

The new act on producer cooperatives resurfaced in the mid-1960s. At this time, preparations were underway for both agricultural and comprehensive economic reform. Reform work on economic management gained momentum from 1964 to 1965.[29] Within a relatively short time, the guidelines for the new act on producer cooperatives were ready. The new act was based on the 1963 draft.[30] According to the draft of the Cooperative Land Act in 1957, cooperatives could

27 HU MNL OL M-KS 288. f. 5. cs. 263. ő. e., Minutes of the meeting of April 19, 1962; 6. Report on the analysis of the leaving cooperative members; Department of Agriculture of the Central Committee of the MSZMP, strictly confidential report for the Political Committee on the analysis of cooperative members who have quit, April 13, 1962. HU MNL OL XIX-K-1-b. 484. ő. e. No. 2.604/1963, Law Department of the Ministerial Secretariat of the Ministry of Agriculture, Secretariat of the Council of Cooperatives, Department of Land Policy of the Ministry of Agriculture, land law issues regarding leaving members of cooperatives and terminations of land lease contracts, September, November, and December 1963. HU MNL OL M-KS 288. f. 28. cs. 1964. 2. ő. e. No. 23/98/1964, Secretariat of the Council of Cooperatives, instructions for the county representatives of the Council of Cooperatives, settling problems related to giving out land from cooperatives, June 6, 1964. HU MNL GyMSMGyL XXIII. 9.a. 79. ő. e. No. 21.827/1966, Ministry of Agriculture, the issue of giving out land from cooperatives, September 9, 1966.

28 HU MNL OL XIX-K-1-bb 263. ő. e. No. 68.065/1962, Strictly confidential proposal for the Agricultural Commission of the Central Committee of the MSZMP on the modification of some regulations regarding the operation of cooperatives, January 20, 1962. HU MNL OL XIX-K-1-b. 382. ő. e. No. 609/1963, Inheritance of lands, which were taken by cooperatives and cooperative groups, May 21, 1963.

29 Varga, *Politika, paraszti érdekérvényesítés*, 127–29.

30 Ibidem, 139–42.

have acquired arable land by requiring members to transfer their land to cooperative ownership. The draft of the Presidential Council's decree of 1958 contained that if the landowner cooperative member had no heirs, the land would have become automatically cooperative property. The draft of the Land Code prepared by Imre Seres in 1963 would have also allowed this form of ownership.

In 1965, a »land policy law package« was published, which supplemented the regulations on land waiving, land consolidation, and the use of uncultivated land. Relevant to the analysis was Resolution No. 860 of the Civil Chamber of the Supreme Court in 1964, which addressed the distribution of land from the common property of cooperatives. The implementation of the law had shifted away from the official rules to such an extent that the legal framework had to be adjusted to it. This was made urgent by social pressure, which did not ease in the mid-1960s. It is challenging to determine the scope of the debate among agrarian politicians, party leaders, and legislators on land law issues based on the documents of party and state organs. It can be assumed that there may have been some resistance from those who argued for the primacy of state ownership, but the position of agrarian reformers was powerful at the time. The extension of state ownership would have been a difficult alternative to accept, as there was no such large-scale nationalization in the »socialist bloc«. In Bulgaria and Romania, the situation was more advanced in this respect, as in these countries, for example, efforts were made to abolish land rent and to introduce some new forms of collective land ownership.

The search for a solution to secure cooperative land use was primarily left to specific jurists who had already worked on the issue. As early as the first half of the 1950s, Imre Seres analyzed land rights and land relations in the people's democracies. His investigations embraced the legal aspects of lands cultivated by cooperatives. It can be assumed that Seres argued not just before but also after 1963 for the creation of cooperative land ownership.[31] In 1965, one of his articles was published in the Journal of State and Jurisprudence, under the title »The question of permanence of collective use of land in the cooperative and the basis of land ownership«. One of his fellow jurists, László Nagy, with whom he worked on the land law questions during cooperative legislation in 1957, also wrote articles reflecting on the issues of land ownership and land use. In 1965, there was undoubtedly considerable background work not only on agricultural reform (e.g., price and tax systems, cooperative management) but also on land issues related to producer cooperatives. Therefore, the central apparatus was able to develop concrete solutions in various proposals and submissions as early as the beginning of 1966. Few information were shared with the public on the codification of land

31 Seres, A termelőszövetkezeti tulajdon, 75–76.

law since 1953. Agricultural jurists referred to ongoing work in their articles or broader studies on current land law issues and legislation. László Nagy and Imre Seres must have been well-informed, as they were involved in the legislative process of the late 1950s and throughout the 1960s.

In an article published in 1965, László Nagy pointed out that in order to complete mass collectivization, it was necessary to maintain private land ownership. In Nagy's opinion, the introduction of cooperative land ownership would have hindered the process at that time.[32] The extent of the debate among jurists on this issue is unclear, but Seres has pointed out in several studies that dogmatists opposed the new property form.[33] From 1965 onwards, his opinion seems to have gained support, not only for the creation of cooperative land ownership but also for its significant extension. This concept fit well in the planned direction of agricultural reform.

The first serious investigation may have begun in 1965 at a meeting of the State Economic Committee, when the topic of cooperative land ownership was raised in connection with the economic mechanism. In the spring of 1965, Imre Dimény, head of the Department of Agriculture of the MSZMP, requested that the head of the State Land Survey and Mapping Office (Állami Földmérési és Térképészeti Hivatal, ÁFTH) prepare a summary on the ownership of land used by cooperatives. The memorandum had to include the extent of certain ownership forms (i.e., land owned by the state, members and family members of cooperatives, and »outsider« landowners).[34] The data on land ownership structure collected by ÁFTH was probably used during the preparation of the new regulation.

Members were still leaving the cooperatives in the mid-1960s, while many of them demanded the return of all or some parts of their land to use it privately. Not only former cooperative members, but also people from whom cooperatives had leased land and heirs requested the return of their lands. Meanwhile, the Ministry of Agriculture continued to work on specific issues concerning land use, which was supplemented with land ownership.[35] The amendment to the title of the proposal illustrates the Ministry's cautionary approach to land ownership.[36]

32 Nagy, A földreform, 129–30.

33 Seres, A termelőszövetkezeti földtulajdon, 128. Sárándi, Seres Imre: A föld, 692. Seres, A termelőszövetkezeti tulajdon, 74–75, 147–72..

34 HU MNL OL M-KS 288. f. 28. cs. 1965. 3. ő. e. No. Mg/285/2, National Land Survey and Mapping Office, memorandum to Imre Dimény regarding data on cooperatives, April 27, 1965.

35 HU MNL OL M-KS 288. f. 28. cs. 1964. 14. ő. e., Ministry of Agriculture, proposal for the Political Committee of the MSZMP on the guidelines related to settling certain land ownership and land use issues, December 30, 1964.

36 Ibid., Department of Agriculture of the Central Committee of the MSZMP, Department of Administration of the Central Committee of the MSZMP, strictly confidential proposal for the Political Committee on the guidelines related to settling certain land ownership and land use issues, January 16, 1965.

In 1965, as a result of the above-mentioned land legislation on land waiving, land consolidation, and the use of uncultivated land, the »land policy law package« was promulgated. It addressed legal questions related to land protection, land waiver, land consolidation, and expropriation. The further review of residential areas and experimental consolidation of fragmented backyard allotments was also decided at the same time.

It appears that certain politicians had already been promoting the concept of large-scale state intervention in land ownership by the mid-1960s. Abolishing private land ownership by introducing cooperative land ownership seemed a »middle way« measure compared to land expropriation by the state. It is likely that in October 1965, because of such considerations, the decision-makers accepted and enacted »only« the above-mentioned land policy law package, which partially affected land use and ownership.[37] The Political Committee of the MSZMP decided in a relatively short time that the competent organs should examine the state of land use and ownership in the cooperatives and that they should prepare a proposal on »further development of land relations«. At the meeting of the Political Committee on January 4, 1966, additional ideas were outlined on the creation of cooperative land ownership (one method was called redemption in the documents).[38]

The Department of Agriculture, in its report under the title of »On the state of the cooperative movement and guidelines for the task of its consolidation«, outlined to the Political Committee that 17% of the land in cooperative use was state-owned and 15–20% was owned by non-cooperative members, i.e., »outsiders«. Due to deaths, leaving, and exclusions from the cooperatives, the number of non-cooperative landowners and the proportion of land owned by them had increased. Consequently, cooperatives had to pay more rent to non-cooperative landowners. The members of cooperatives owned about 65% of the collectivized lands and received a certain payment as land rent as well.[39] The guidelines in December 1965, which were included in the report, would have prohibited transfer of land out from the producer cooperatives in all possible cases, i.e., in the event of leaving, inheritance and lease termination. It was envisaged to redeem the land of heirs who were not engaged in agricultural production as a profession. This regulation was considered a further development of the regulation that was

37 HU MNL OL Minutes and supplements of the Council of Ministers (1944–1990), Government of Gyula Kállai, June 30, 1965 – April 14, 1967, Minutes No. 325 from October 14, 1965, Decree No. 19, 20, and 21 of 1965 of the People's Republic Presidential Council.

38 Redemption, in this context, means the purchase by the cooperatives.

39 Ibid., Department of Agriculture of the Central Committee of the MSZMP, strictly confidential report to the Political Committee on the state of the cooperative movement and guidelines for consolidating its tasks, December 10, 1965.

proposed from the end of the 1950s. The lawmakers believed that all land law issues could be resolved in the forthcoming act on producer cooperatives.

THE SEPARATE LAND ACT AND »SOCIALIZATION OF LAND OWNERSHIP«

Chapter V of the draft of the new act on producer cooperatives, which was completed in the first half of 1966, detailed cooperative common property. It has already included redemption among the acquisition of property by the cooperatives under the headword »cooperative property«. Therefore, land redemption would have been an integral part of the land law provisions of the act on producer cooperatives. The draft also included a proposal for a possible separate codification of land-related provisions to be prepared.[40]

The material on legal issues on land, under the title of »The ownership and use of land by producer cooperatives«, listed the reasons for interfering with land rights while keeping the interests of cooperatives in the foreground. Of the 9 million cadastral hold (katasztrális hold, kh)[41] of land in collective use, 2 million kh were owned by the state, 5.2 million kh by members of cooperatives, and 1.8 million kh by outsider landowners. One of the land policy options, namely the prohibition of giving out land from collective use, was elaborated lengthy in the draft with other possible options for »socialization«. Gradual socialization was suggested by limiting inheritance, allowing further land waiver, and immediate redemption through a single act.[42] In the spring of 1966, it was decided, as part of the ongoing abolition of private land ownership, that the land of outsiders would be taken into cooperative ownership.

The creation of cooperative land ownership was combined with some unresolved land law issues that had not yet been addressed by legislation, which also impacted cooperative land use. For instance, the legal issues surrounding workers' land, garden, and backyard allotments. This was also a significant argument in favor of a separate land act.[43] This was partly a continuation of the legislative

40 HU MNL OL XIX-K-1-b. 619. ő. e., Draft of the New Producer Cooperative Act, April 1966, Chapter V. Common property.

41 1 kh was equal to 0.575 hectare.

42 The material which dealt with land law questions was prepared already by May 1966. HU MNL OL M-KS 288. f. 28. cs. 1966. 3. ő. e., Secretariat of the Ministry of Agriculture, land ownership, and land use of producer cooperatives, May 23, 1966. HU MNL OL M-KS 288. f. 28. cs. 1966. 2. ő. e., Ministry of Agriculture, proposal for the Political Committee of the MSZMP on the new act on producer cooperatives, May 25, 1966. HU MNL OL M-KS 288. f. 28. cs. 1966. 8. ő. e., Ministry of Agriculture, proposal for guidelines on the regulation of the operation and farm management of cooperatives. July 6, 1966.

43 HU MNL OL XIX-K-1-b. 620. ő. e., Solution of relevant land law issues of the agricultural producer cooperatives, probably in July or September 1966.

work that had been planned, started, delayed, and interrupted on several occasions since 1953/54. The proposed Land Act could not have been a comprehensive and general land code, but the lawmakers intended to settle land rights issues in one regulation.

At its meeting on September 20, 1966, the Political Committee discussed a proposal to develop land ownership and use further. The politicians argued for establishing a unified form of land ownership and land use. They stressed that securing the use of land by cooperatives required the gradual socialization of private land ownership. This meant, as mentioned above, that the cooperatives acquired the land of outsiders. The purchase price had to be paid in equal instalments over 5 years. If a member of a cooperative died and their heir was neither a cooperative member nor a member who joined the cooperative after the death, the land was automatically redeemed. Private ownership of land would be gradually eliminated over the long term through this legal mechanism.[44] The change of approach is emphasized by the fact that the lands of cooperative members were not socialized by law from above. Inheritance was restricted, allowing the land of a cooperative member to be inherited only by another cooperative member.

The Political Committee decided at its meeting on September 20 that the main aspects of both the Act on Producer Cooperatives and the Act on Land should be submitted to the Central Committee simultaneously.[45] By the end of September 1967, the Department of Agriculture had prepared the main guidelines and proposals to develop further land ownership, as well as land use and operation of producer cooperatives.[46] According to the proposal, the Land Act had to be drafted by August 1, 1967, while the Producer Cooperative Act had to be drafted by August 31, 1967. On October 4, 1966, the Political Committee, and shortly thereafter, on October 13, the Central Committee also put the proposal on its agenda. According to the document, the land law issues were placed in the framework of the gradual cooperativization of land ownership.[47] The first draft

44 HU MNL OL M-KS 288. f. 28. cs. 1966. 1. ő. e., Department of Agriculture of the Central Committee of the MSZMP, strictly confidential proposal for the Political Committee on the development of land ownership and land use, September 12, 1966. HU MNL OL XIX-K-1-b. 620. ő. e., Department of Agriculture of the Central Committee of the MSZMP, strictly confidential proposal (draft) for the Political Committee on the main issues of the operation of producer cooperatives, September 7, 1966.

45 HU MNL OL M-KS 288. f. 5. cs. 405. ő. e., September 20, 1966, Proposal on further development of land ownership and land use; Department of Agriculture of the Central Committee of the MSZMP, strictly confidential proposal for the Political Committee on further development of land ownership and land use, September 10, 1966.

46 HU MNL OL M-KS 288. f. 28. cs. 1966. 3. ő. e., Department of Agriculture of the Central Committee of the MSZMP, strictly confidential proposal (draft) for the Central Committee on the main issues linked to the development of our cooperative policy, September 27, 1966.

47 HU MNL OL M-KS 288. f. 5. cs. 406. ő. e., Minutes of the meeting of the Political Committee on October 4, 1966, strictly confidential; No. 6: Proposal, the main issues linked to the development of our

of the Land Act was prepared by the Land Policy Department of the Ministry of Agriculture and was submitted to the Codification Committee on October 27, 1966.[48]

The political decision has been taken, but there has been no public consultation or cooperation on this critical matter. Neither in newspaper articles nor in scientific writings was there any hint during 1965 and until the end of 1966 that the socialization of land used by the cooperatives was planned. Since the cooperatives were not only a new type of farm that transformed agriculture, but also an economic unit that transformed society, land ownership could be linked to the creation of a new »cooperative peasant class«. At the 9th Congress of the Communist Party, held from November 28 to December 3, 1966, a formal decision was made to introduce economic reform. Agricultural affairs dominated the congress. This event was one of the most outstanding achievements of the Hungarian agricultural reformers.[49] The party leadership announced during this event the introduction of cooperative land ownership.[50] As detailed above, legislation was already in progress at the time.

In contrast to the congress's findings, landowners insisted on private ownership. People gave back land to state ownership mainly because of their disadvantaged economic and financial situation. They ceded land, which was also redistributed during the land reform. Private interests were taken into account to a certain extent during land legislation; for instance, cooperatives paid for the land, meaning the owners could receive compensation.[51] Another important aspect of the economic reform was that the autonomous management of cooperatives was facilitated by their ability to cultivate land, which they acquired through various means.[52]

The first draft of the Land Act was completed by February 1967, and its preparation continued until August.[53] Several points were discussed and agreed upon

cooperative policy. HU MNL OL M-KS 288. f. 4. cs. 83. ő. e., October 13, 1966, 3. Agricultural policy proposals; Political Committee of the MSZMP, No. K8/70 strictly confidential decision of the Central Committee on agricultural policy measures, draft, October 6, 1966; I. Gradual cooperativization of land ownership. (Modified title: Gradual takeover of arable land into cooperative ownership).

48 HU MNL OL XIX-K-1-b. 620. ő. e., Problematic of the new land act, October 1966, The first draft of the Land Act on the Codification Committee meeting on October 27, 1966.

49 Papp, Fehér Lajos, 316–19.

50 *Népszabadság*, November 29, 1966, 1, Kádár János elvtárs előadói beszéde. *Népszabadság*, December 3, 1966, 6–7, Fehér Lajos: Szocialista alapokon fejlődik a magyar falu.

51 HU MNL GyMSMSL XXIII. 310 28. ő. e. No. 7.010/1967, Guidelines for communists participating in the Congress of Cooperatives, probably February 1967. The first national congress of the cooperatives took place between April 20 and 22, 1967 – Papp, Fehér Lajos, 323–25.

52 On innovation and economic reform see: Schlett, The Socialist-Type Process, 900–27.

53 HU MNL OL XIX-K-1-y. 1614. ő. e., No. 35.342/1967, Preparation of the act on further development of land ownership and land use, draft, February 17, 1967. HU MNL OL XIX-K-1-y. 1624. ő. e. No. 36.500/1967, Proposal for the Hungarian Revolutionary Worker-Peasant Government on some

without clarification in the summer of 1967.[54] During 1967, newspaper articles on this subject were published in general, as well as three studies that elaborated on the issue of land ownership among producer cooperatives in particular. The government put the acts on agricultural cooperatives and further development of land ownership and use on the agenda at its meeting on August 31, 1967.

In the autumn of 1967, the Parliament voted favorably, and the two acts were published simultaneously in the Hungarian Gazette on October 11, 1967.[55] In addition to the details mentioned above, the Land Act contained regulations governing personal land ownership and land use, maximizing the area of garden and building plots owned and used by private individuals. The Hungarian legislators created an extremely specific regulation by drafting the Land Act. In fact, the cooperative members gradually abolished private land ownership. They paid for their land theoretically by utilizing their material assets, which were accumulated on their land through collective use. This was likely a truly unique phenomenon in the world. As a »result« of the transformation of land structure, by 1990, only 35% of the land used by producer cooperatives was privately owned.[56]

ANOTHER ATTEMPT TO DRAFT A GENERAL LAND CODE, 1967–1968

The Land Act triggered major changes in the land tenure system in both the short and long term. The land law textbooks published in the 1960s and 1970s confirm the significance of this legal provision. However, despite the Land Act, legislators planned a separate, general land code once again.[57] It can be assumed that this was also in the interest of agrarian reformers at the time. Land law would have been codified since 1953/54 partially to strengthen »socialist legality«. Thus, the concept of a joint act on producer cooperatives and land law could have been a starting point for reform thinking from a legal perspective. A general land code

issues of land ownership and land use, June 15, 1967; Law No. … of 1967 on certain issues of land ownership and land use, June 12, 1967.

54 HU MNL OL XIX-K-1-b. 620. ő. e., Ministry of Agriculture and Food, memorandum on issues linked to the draft of the governmental decrees regarding the implementation of the cooperative and land acts, June 23, 1967.

55 *Hungarian Gazette* 1967, No. 68, October 11, 1967, Law No. 4 of 1967 on further development of land ownership and land use. *Hungarian Gazette* 1967, No. 68, October 11, 1967, Law No. 3 of 1967 on agricultural producer cooperatives.

56 Romány, Földbirtok-politika és földtulajdon, 101.

57 Nagy and Seres (eds.), *Mezőgazdasági jog*, 26–27. In the Hungarian land law university textbook, published in 1969, the relevant part of the agricultural law textbook of 1966 was repeated, that is, that land law was not summarized in a code, but in 1969 they already added that the first Hungarian land code will be necessary in the near future. The same was repeated in the 1974 edition – Seres (ed.), *Mezőgazdasági jog I.* Seres (ed.), *Földjog*, 29–30.

would have reinforced the legal-ideological concept of the new form of property, namely cooperative land ownership, in the 1950s and the 1960s as well. Although Imre Seres did not mention it in his land law textbook or his other writings, several newspaper articles confirm that in 1967/68, land law was not only planned to be »recodified,« but its codification also began and was in progress. The reason behind the cancellation or delay of the land code in the late 1960s may be that economic policy interests and views clashed at higher levels of political decision-making.

At the end of September 1967, when the Parliament accepted the acts on producer cooperatives and land ownership and use, Dezső Illés, the new representative of Somogy County, referred in his speech not only to land reform and land compensation issues, but also to the fact that they needed a unified land code to resolve land rights problems.[58] The daily newspaper of the Heves County party committee of the MSZMP and the County Council, Népújság, published an article on September 13, 1967, under the title »Who owns the 60 squares«. The article stated that a land code was being prepared as a fact.[59] In both February and June 1968, articles appeared that mentioned the forthcoming land code.[60] In the minutes of the Executive Committee of Somogy County, a report can be found that also refers to the upcoming land code. Following the 1968 attempt, the codification of land law occurred in the mid-1980s. The Land Act (Law No. 1 of 1987) was published in April 1987. It regulated land rights until the change of the political system in the late 1980s.

58 *Somogyi Néplap*, September 30, 1967, 2, Illés Dezső: A földjoggal összefüggő régi rendeleteket revízió alá kell venni. *Országgyűlési Napló* 1967, Seventh plenum of the Parliament on September 29, 1967, Dezső Illés's speech, 464–68. Imre Dimény, minister of agriculture and food, endorsed the proposal in his answer to Illés's speech; however, he expressed his opinion that the preparation of the code will take more time than one year – ibid., 494.

59 *Népújság*, September 13, 1967, 3, Kié a 60 négyszögöl?

60 *Petőfi Népe*, February 9, 1968, 4, Az új földtörvény és végrehajtása. *Kelet-Magyarország*, June 19, 1968, 3, Háromszáz jogszabály helyett kettő.

CONCLUSION

In this paper, I elaborate on the codification attempts of land law in the first two decades of the communist dictatorship in Hungary. This research topic is almost entirely neglected in the Hungarian literature; however, most authors do refer to land legislation and the Land Act of 1967. Land law codification was first linked to softer economic and agricultural policy in the »New Course«. The archival research revealed that restrictions on private property resulted in social and economic tensions. Land ownership issues raised legal questions as early as the first crisis of the Stalinist regime in 1952. Therefore, forms of ownership were also in focus during legislation in the »New Course«. The legislative concept of the transition from capitalism to socialism was based on a slower, more gradual transformation, which the radical Stalinists rejected. This can be traced by analyzing archival sources on land legislation in general, as well as the preparation of land acts and codes in particular. On the one hand, documents were evaluated for the codification of land law; on the other hand, political decisions and policy changes were elaborated to contextualize the legislative process.

The agrarian reformers clearly represented continuity from the first half of the 1950s in this regard. They combined the reform approach with the real or perceived possibilities inherent in the given socio-economic conditions during legislation. However, among the main goals was to reinforce common property forms and to abolish private ownership. Already in the »New Course«, lawmakers were discussing the possibility of introducing cooperative ownership of land. After 1956, in the post-revolutionary period, this form of ownership had to contribute to keeping land in collective use as a tool. Since there is a lack of documents on the general codification attempt of land law in the first half of the 1960s, one could only speculate that private ownership of land was regulated to a limited extent. The agrarian reformers also sought to emancipate cooperatives in a legal sense; such a form of ownership may have been the most acceptable for them. Researching records on land issues at the local level can reveal the dynamics of socio-economic relations and the effects of actions by council and party administrations. Furthermore, not only the analyzed two decades, but also the codification attempts and land legislation of the following two decades, could be subject to further archival research at the national level to fill gaps in the literature. The creation of cooperative land ownership was an option to expand the economic independence of cooperatives and to resolve decades-old land conflicts. Undoubtedly, at the end of a lengthy legal process, the interests of cooperatives were placed at the center to ensure the long-term integrity of collective large-scale land use. A theoretical suggestion of this research is that the

concept of »socialization of land ownership« implies further collectivization in the Hungarian countryside after 1961. Summarily, it can be stated that without proper insight into the land law codification process up until 1967, the agrarian reforms and cooperative legislation cannot be fully understood as a whole.

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Marta Rendla

Socialist Agricultural Policy and the Agricultural Extension Service in Slovenia since the Early 1970s

INTRODUCTION

This article aims to briefly highlight the key characteristics of the agricultural policy of the revolutionary communist regime in socialist Slovenia, particularly in the context of frequently shifting political and economic directions.* It focuses on the period both before and after the establishment of a new concept of agricultural policy between 1968 and 1971. Furthermore, the article seeks to shed light on the vision of the new agricultural policy concept and the development of agriculture and the food industry after 1970. It also aims to present an integral part of the new agricultural policy – the agenda and organization of the revitalized agricultural extension services following the revival of socialist cooperatives.

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In examining the study and historiography of Slovenian agricultural development, it becomes evident that this area has remained relatively marginalized in comparison to the more extensively researched field of political history. Nonetheless, among Slovenian historians, particular attention should be given to the work of Žarko Lazarević and Zdenko Čepič. Lazarević's research, among other subjects, addresses the development of agriculture and the socio-economic position of agriculture and the rural population within both capitalist and socialist economic systems. For the period preceding the Second World War, his focus primarily lies on the issue of peasant indebtedness and the mechanisms for debt resolution. In contrast, for the socialist period, he provides a general analysis of the transformation of agricultural policy from a capitalist to a socialist framework.

Čepič, by contrast, concentrates on the first fifteen years of socialist agriculture, with particular emphasis on the implementation of agrarian reform, colonization, and collectivization. Concerning the socialist period, it is also essential to highlight the contributions of Edvard Kardelj, a Slovene and the principal architect of Yugoslav socialist agricultural policy, as well as of Croatian statesman, politician, and Marxist theorist, Vladimir Bakarić. Both Kardelj and Bakarić engaged with fundamental questions concerning the construction and organization of a socialist state and society, including the position and role of the rural population within that framework.

In the context of regulating the position of peasants and the rural population, it is essential to mention the legal scholar Emil Čeferin, who formulated the legal foundations for addressing the socio-economic status of peasants. Among scholars from the former Yugoslavia, notable contributions include those of Croatian economist Vladimir Stipetić, who focused on the development and structural position of agriculture; Ivan Lončarević, who studied agricultural pricing policy in socialist Yugoslavia; and Dragan Veselinov, along with sociologist and legal theorist Stipe Šuvar, both of whom addressed the so-called »peasant question«. Svetolik Popović also merits mention for his analysis of agricultural policy up to the 1960s.

Yugoslav agricultural policy also attracted the interest of several foreign scholars. Notably, Arthur W. Wright and Lloyd S. Etheredge wrote about the transfer of Soviet economic and agricultural policies to communist Czechoslovakia and Yugoslavia. At the same time, Robert F. Miller examined the development of Yugoslav agricultural policy and the evolving relationship between the dominant private sector and the officially favored public/social[1] sector.

1 The shift from the term »state« to »social« began in 1953, when the Yugoslav Federal Constitutional Law established self-management as the foundation of the new social order, thereby replacing state

The agricultural extension service in socialist Slovenia has not yet been the subject of a comprehensive study, and individual authors – such as rural sociologist Ana Barbič – refer to it only in the context of educating the rural population.

BETWEEN IDEOLOGY AND PRACTICE: AGRICULTURAL POLICY IN SOCIALIST SLOVENIA

Socialist agricultural policy and farming under communist leadership in Slovenia, within the framework of Yugoslavia, were characterized by the alignment of economic objectives with political and ideological goals amidst modernization and accelerated industrialization. The primary function of agriculture at the time, as it remains today, was to ensure the population's food supply. The economic challenge of providing sufficient quantities of food was to be addressed within the establishment of a new social, political, and economic order – socialism. This was achieved through the creation of a state and cooperative agricultural sector, sourced from nationalized land acquired through agrarian reform (1945–1948), and a multitude of small farms that, due to economic pressures, were compelled to integrate into the state agricultural sector via the newly established socialist cooperative system.[2] The agrarian reform, through the administrative redistribution of confiscated and expropriated land, led to further fragmentation of the land ownership structure. This resulted in a decrease in the number of larger agricultural estates and an increase in the number of small and medium-sized farms.[3] For the most part, agricultural holdings were established that were neither capable of generating surpluses for sale nor of sustaining families without seeking income sources outside agricultural activities.[4] This was also a goal of communist ideology, as one of its primary concerns, at least until the second half of the 1960s, was the »peasant question,« rooted in a fear of the farming class, particularly wealthy farmers. Communist ideology assumed that private land ownership, regardless of its size, perpetually carried the potential for the emergence of capitalism in rural areas. The private farmer, especially a wealthy one, was perceived as a threat to socialism. As a result, they were confined within narrow productive limits and subjected to economic, political, and social restrictions. The new revolutionary communist regime viewed agriculture

and cooperative ownership with a concept of social ownership – defined as ownership by everyone and by no one.

2 Čepič, Kmetijska politika, 891. Lazarević, *Delo*, 100.

3 Lazarević, *Delo*, 100.

4 Čepič, Kmetijska politika, 890.

primarily through a political lens rather than as an economic issue tied to land ownership structure and agricultural production methods.[5]

The implemented agrarian reform essentially laid the foundation for the envisioned agricultural policy. Through the agrarian reform, the state and cooperative agricultural sectors were established, while the small-scale private agricultural sector was preserved.[6] Thus, it was the framework upon which the implementation of socialist agricultural policy was based. Agricultural policy in Slovenia, within the context of Yugoslavia, essentially followed the interpretation of classical Marxism, which argued that peasants, due to the developmental trends of agriculture towards land ownership concentration and the monopolization of production in the form of large agricultural operations using mechanization, could not survive in the long term as small producers. The only difference in following the Soviet socialist strategy lay in the tactics.[7] Similar to other socialist countries, Yugoslavia followed the Marxist strategy concerning the peasant question and agricultural policy. This strategy aimed to build socialism as an economically efficient and socially just system by eliminating the peasantry as a social class and transforming them into workers within the framework of large, industrial, collective, socialist agricultural production.[8] Although Yugoslavia deviated from the Soviet socialist model of agricultural policy[9] – being the only European socialist country to abandon the collective farming model in 1953 – the effects of the Yugoslav model of agrarian policy were similar to the Soviet one. After the abandonment of collectivization, private peasants were confined to even narrower productive limits, yet, through the new cooperative system, they were tolerated or allowed to coexist with the system.[10] However, in a comparative context, Yugoslavia – especially Slovenia – achieved a record speed of deagrarianization. Partial deagrarianization also emerged on a large scale. The tactic towards private farming in the first twenty years after the Second World War can, except for the harsh collectivization period from 1949 to 1953, be compared to Lenin's view on small private producers. His stance was that peasants as a class should be eliminated, but not overnight and through violent expropriation; rather, it should be done through a careful and deliberate organization of labor relations. He envisioned this within a new form of cooperativism.[11]

Similarly, the leading architect of Yugoslav agricultural policy, the Slovenian Edvard Kardelj, viewed the new socialist cooperativism both as an organizational

5 Čepič, Kaj, kako, zakaj?, 575–91. Partlič, »Znanost«, 428.
6 Čepič, Kaj, kako, zakaj?, 580.
7 Partlič, »Znanost«, 430–32. Lazarević. Uvod, 12.
8 Partlič, »Znanost«, 430–32.
9 Merl, Sovietization.
10 Partlič, »Znanost«, 430–32.
11 Ibidem, 430–32.

tool for the reconstruction of agriculture and as a political means to »destroy the remnants of capitalist exploitation«.[12] The socialist cooperative agricultural sector was intended to complement the agrarian reform from both economic and political perspectives. Politically, it was meant to serve as an intermediary between the state/socially-owned agricultural sector and the private agricultural sector, functioning as a means of control, direction, and integration of the prevailing private agricultural sector into the state/socially-owned agricultural sector.[13] In this way, it was also intended to meet economic goals. The socialist cooperative sector was to be »supporting the state in implementing the national economic plan,« as the aim was the socialization of private agricultural production.[14] In its objectives, socialist cooperativism thus differed from the goals of classical cooperativism. Classical cooperativism, from its emergence in the mid-19th century until the Second World War, aimed to promote economic benefits and develop the economic or social activities of its members from the small-scale economic sector (merchants, craftsmen, peasants, workers) through a shared business operation (cooperatives) in an environment dominated by the power of capital.[15]

Socialist Yugoslavia and Slovenia, as its integral part, like other communist countries under Soviet influence, designed the country's accelerated and forced industrialization at the neglect of agriculture and the economic, political, and social discrimination of the rural population. With agricultural product prices that were disproportionate to those of industrial goods, agriculture was positioned as a source of accumulation for the development of the industrial sector. At the same time, disproportionate prices for agricultural products were used to regulate the macroeconomic level of agricultural food production. A system of taxation on private peasants further complemented the intervention in relative prices.[16]

Frequent changes in economic orientation characterized Socialist Yugoslavia and Slovenia. In the second half of the 1950s, the authorities decided to pursue a more balanced development of economic sectors. Among these sectors, greater attention was to be given to agriculture, which consistently lagged behind industry in terms of accumulation, investments, and economic outcomes. By the late 1950s, there was also a growing recognition that the development of private agriculture and agricultural cooperatives had reached a point where, according to agricultural policy makers, the focus of agricultural development needed to shift

12 See: Čepič, Kmetje, 325–36.

13 Lazarević, Rendla, and Sedlaček, *Zgodovina*, 150, 153. Between the two main forms of agricultural holdings, private and social, private farms dominated in terms of both number and land area. By the end of the socialist era, social agricultural holdings managed only about 15% of agricultural land in social ownership – Kovačič, Kmetijstvo, 166.

14 Lazarević, Rendla, and Sedlaček, *Zgodovina*, 150.

15 Ibid, 150, 151. Kovačič, Kmetijstvo, 174.

16 Lazarević, *Delo*, 105.

unilaterally to the socially-owned agricultural sector. This sector, along with the most advanced part of the cooperative sector, was expected to meet the demands for food security.[17]

In the context of economic reforms during the 1960s, agriculture underwent a reorganization driven by the desire to establish a significant and robust agricultural establishment and enterprises, thereby creating a socially-owned agricultural sector.[18] In practice, this meant merging cooperatives into larger cooperatives and affiliating agricultural cooperatives with socially-owned agricultural enterprises – agricultural conglomerates (agrokombinats). Although both agricultural ownership sectors consistently lagged behind the industry sector due to the prioritization of industrialization, the profitability and productivity of the private agricultural sector in Slovenia (as well as elsewhere in Yugoslavia) consistently fell behind those of the state agricultural sector. This was due to price policies and administrative restrictions on investments in private farms. From the 1960s onward, the disparity in relative production growth and profitability continued to widen, deepening over the long term to the detriment of private agriculture.[19] For example, the income of the rural population between 1967 and 1970 amounted to only 37% to 53% of the income of the non-rural population. Private agriculture was primarily self-sufficient in its production structure, characterized by fragmented land ownership, poor equipment, insufficient integration of peasants with agricultural organizations, and a low level of education.[20]

In the 1960s, the dynamic development of agricultural cooperatives through socialist cooperation, based on contract-based purchasing introduced after the abolition of strict collectivization in 1953, was interrupted. The peasant's interest representative organization, the Main Cooperative Union of Slovenia, was also dissolved.[21] The strong focus on so-called agrokombinats resulted in the neglect of the potential of private agriculture. On the one hand, it led to the strengthening of the socially-owned agricultural sector, while on the other, it devalued and underestimated the role of the private peasants.[22] Cooperatives, by limiting peasants' self-management, distanced themselves from the needs of their peasant members. In the context of cooperatives operating under principles similar to those of enterprises and prioritizing workers in their management, peasants became mere contractors in cooperation arrangements, with little influence on the functioning of cooperatives and cooperative enterprises. This resulted in the

17 *Kmetijsko zadružništvo*, 22.
18 *Razvoj*, 8, 13, 17.
19 Lazarević, Uvod, 15.
20 *Razvoj*, 5, 11.
21 Avsec, Kmetijsko zadružništvo, 4.
22 *Razvoj*, 8, 13, 17.

dominance of collective interests over those of the peasants. Cooperative efforts focused on maximizing income, which was effectively generated for the cooperative rather than for its members. This focus also hindered cooperatives from taking on additional roles, such as providing education or distributing income. Cooperatives failed to adequately perform their fundamental tasks, such as supplying peasants with necessary agricultural materials and purchasing their produce. Often, cooperatives were unable to offer the required goods or lacked stock at the appropriate time. Additionally, they frequently purchased only agricultural products with guaranteed markets. As a result, peasants/cooperative members had to seek their own markets to avoid wasting their produce. The cooperative machinery pool, intended for working on peasants' land, was also significantly diminished. In many cases, cooperative machinery was converted into enterprises for transporting goods. Some agrokombinats organizing cooperative production, such as chicken farming, engaged with cooperative members only through production contracts. Under such agreements, contractors were left with no rights to the fruits of their labor after they had handed over their produce to the cooperative partner. Furthermore, cooperatives suffered from a lack of expertise, partly due to lower wages in agriculture compared to other sectors. This led to organizational decline, with cooperatives gradually losing their operational capacity.[23]

Given such a course of events, after 1960, both the number of cooperatives and their membership declined sharply. In 1955, there were 714 agricultural cooperatives; by 1960, this number had dropped to 421, and by 1964, to just 88. By 1969, the number of agricultural cooperatives had fallen further to 62. Similarly, the membership of agricultural cooperatives also experienced a steep decline: in 1958, cooperatives had 126,000 members; by 1961, the number had dropped to around 115,000; by 1964, it was approximately 68,000; and by 1966, only about 46,000 peasants remained as members of agricultural cooperatives.[24]

In the context of an unfavorable agricultural policy, particularly during the first 25 years after the war, marked by various restrictive measures targeting private farming while exclusively promoting the socially-owned agricultural sector, and due to virtually unlimited employment opportunities in industry that came with associated rights and social benefits, the rural population was forced to seek employment outside agriculture.

The post-war period's extensive industrialization, which required a large workforce, attracted primarily rural laborers in a predominantly agrarian country with a limited industrial workforce. Agricultural policy suppressed the development of private farming's economic potential through unfavorable measures,

23 *Kmetijsko zadružništvo,* 22, 23, 25–27. Avsec, Kmetijsko zadružništvo, 4, 5. *Razvoj*, 17, 18.
24 *Razvoj*, 17.

including the establishment of a land ownership limit in 1953 – lowered for the second time since the war to just 10 ha of arable land–and the prohibition of modernization, such as the acquisition of farm machinery and tractors, until 1967.

These restrictions made it difficult for many peasants to develop their family farms–averaging 5.5 ha in size, with only 2.5 ha of arable land – and generate sufficient income for survival.[25] Consequently, a significant portion of the rural population sought employment outside of agriculture. Agrarian poverty and overpopulation – on the one hand – and industrial sector employment opportunities, on the other hand, drove the rural labor force away from agriculture to non-agrarian sectors. Deagrarianization and partial deagrarianization were driven by the undervaluation of agricultural labor, the high demand for labor in industry, and the fact that regular employment provided a higher and more reliable income, along with social rights and benefits derived from work. Mixed farms, where one or more family members were employed in the non-agricultural sector, combined income from farming with income from non-agricultural employment. In some cases, employment in the non-agricultural sector became the dominant source of income, while farming became a supplementary activity. The process of deagrarianization led to the abandonment of farming altogether. In contrast, partial deagrarianization resulted in the emergence of mixed households or semi-farms, where families combined agricultural work with industrial or other non-agricultural employment.[26] This led to the socio-economic stratification of farms in rural areas.[27] The effect of this process was also a decline in the prestige of farming as a profession. By creating a layer of the population with minimal chances for survival, the government effectively provided a source of labor for the planned industrialization.[28]

The motivation for dual employment of individuals, particularly male members of mixed farms, was not a peculiar feature of Yugoslav society, but rather a global phenomenon, viewed as a transitional phase that helped farms navigate critical stages. It was based on economic necessity, the desire to improve living standards, or the need to fulfill other personal interests and needs.[29]

By the early 1970s, mixed farms became dominant in Slovenia. In 1971, they accounted for 57% of all farms.[30] According to agricultural sociologist Ana Barbič, who classified farms into pure and mixed types based on income generation, the

25 Rus and Rupena–Osolnik, Vloga, 155.
26 Barbič, *Kmetov vsakdan*, 244–51.
27 Kovačič, Kmetijstvo, 167.
28 Lazarević, *Delo*, 105. Čepič, Kmetijska politika, 891. Barbič, *Kmetov vsakdan*, 244. Makarovič, Družine, 135.
29 Barbič, *Kmetov vsakdan,* 256, 266.
30 Rus and Rupena–Osolnik, Vloga, 155.

share of mixed farms increased to 72% by 1981.[31] With the emergence of mixed farms, private agriculture became significantly feminized, as the employment of predominantly male family members in the non-agricultural sector led to women taking a more central role in agricultural production.

THE CONCEPT OF AGRICULTURAL POLICY IN THE LAST TWO DECADES OF YUGOSLAV SOCIALISM

The lagging behind of agriculture compared to other economic sectors, as well as developed industrial countries, which simultaneously accelerated their agricultural development through technical and technological revolutions alongside industrial development and deagrarianization, influenced the communist government to opt for faster agricultural development and more balanced economic development for Slovenia. To this end, between 1968 and 1971, a new concept for the development of agriculture, known as the *Concept for the Long-Term Development of Agriculture and the Food Industry for the Period 1968–1990*, was formulated. Key elements of the long-term agricultural policy were focused on strengthening the socio-economic position of peasants and agricultural workers, implementing self-management, reinforcing cooperatives, and rationally utilizing natural resources. The primary emphasis was to accelerate the development of livestock production, improve peasants' knowledge, introduce and apply science and cutting-edge technologies in practice, and work towards a more efficient and socially organized market food production system.[32] Agricultural policy, in contrast to past practices, which underestimated, suppressed, and hindered the development and survival of private farms, sought to integrate them into socially organized agricultural production in the long-term development of agriculture and the food industry. Unlike the 1960s, when the economic potential of private agriculture was undermined, the policy now aimed to incorporate these potentials through measures designed to increase production. The private agricultural sector, which cultivated 82% of all agricultural land and 88% of arable land, was increasingly recognized in connection with socialist cooperatives as an important factor in ensuring food security.[33]

Agricultural development programs, both long-term and medium-term, aimed to achieve continuous and stable food production, aligned with the demand for agricultural products in domestic and foreign markets, as well as to

31 Barbič, *Kmetov vsakdan,* 290.
32 *XV. redni občni zbor*, 1.
33 *Razvoj*, 8. *Poročilo*, 20.

improve the reproductive capacity of agriculture and reduce income disparities. The additional development goal was to increase productivity and close the price gap. Among the development tasks, they also envisioned more efficient use of agricultural capacities and more controlled deagrarianization. The outmigration from agriculture was deliberately intended to proceed at a relatively slow pace, to prevent worsening food supply issues. A key lever for the renewal of private agriculture – alongside the establishment and implementation of a law on partial interest compensation and the republic-level participation in agricultural and primary processing loans – was the work of the agricultural extension service.[34]

The strategy for the development of agriculture and the food industry positioned the agricultural extension service, with its objectives, as an integral part of the measures to achieve the agricultural development tasks. According to the so-called Green plan, introduced in the early 1970s, which encompassed strategies for achieving the highest possible level of food self-sufficiency, agriculture was to increase the level of food self-sufficiency to 85–88%. The most significant shares of market production were to be focused on products for which Slovenia had favorable natural and economic conditions (milk, beef, potatoes, hops, wine, some types of fruits and vegetables). Higher productivity was to be achieved through the introduction of modern technologies and scientific discoveries in agriculture. Since this also meant an excess of labor force, the reduction of the rural population was expected to continue. Aware of the problem of depopulation and the unfavorable age structure of the population in certain regions, more regulated deagrarianization was planned. At the same time, the modernization and better equipping of the remaining farms were intended to enhance their financial stability.[35]

Private agriculture was to be revitalized with the program of so-called farm restructuring. This meant the restructuring of farms based on natural conditions, shifting from diverse, self-sufficiency-oriented production to simplified, specialized market-oriented production. Market-oriented farming was intended to generate income, which would depend on the farm's labor productivity, cost-price relations, and employment, meaning the relationship between the amount of required labor and the available workforce.[36] Farms were to specialize in specific agricultural sectors, such as cattle breeding, piglet breeding or fattening pigs to slaughter weight, sheep farming, and vegetable production, among others.[37] Market-oriented farms, along with socially-owned agricultural enterprises, were to become the central pillars of agricultural production, hubs for modern

34 *Razvoj*, 13. *Ustanovni občni zbor*, 36.
35 *Razvoj*, 14, 23.
36 Kovačič, Kmetijstvo, 172.
37 *Izredni občni zbor*, 15, 16.

technology, and leading market producers. As part of the restructuring of private farming, an important decision was made that mixed farms (or semi-farms), which became dominant from the 1970s onward, should also receive equal attention. Numerous semi-farms were significant not only for agricultural market production but also for preserving agricultural land. Many semi-farms continued to cultivate land primarily because non-agricultural income was reinvested in farming activities.[38]

The concept of long-term development for agriculture and the food industry anticipated the intensification of agricultural production in all sectors of crop and livestock production, also based on new forms of peasant cooperation brought about by cooperative legislation, particularly through the Peasants' Association Act (Zakon o združevanju kmetov, 1972, 1979).[39] The four basic forms of peasant cooperation (agricultural cooperatives with territorially organized cooperative units and special workers organizations, cooperation facilities in agricultural enterprises (agrokombinats), agricultural production communities, and various contract-based associations) were intended, unlike in the 1960s, to ensure peasants' influence on programmatic and production orientations. In agricultural production communities (machinery, perennial crop restoration, reclamation, dairy, pasture, and joint barn construction communities), specialized farms in specific agricultural sectors would be encouraged to join. These communities were expected to lower production and breeding costs through collective purchasing of materials necessary for specialized agriculture, joint selling of goods, and collaboration with specialized expert services. Agricultural policy also advocated for leaving the search for new forms of cooperation, as well as determining the most suitable form, to the affected peasants themselves. A regulated market for agricultural products, which was expected to lead to better prices, was to motivate peasants towards higher and better-quality production.[40]

The various forms of peasant cooperation were intended to facilitate the inclusion of peasants and their production into the socially-owned agricultural sector, thereby contributing to the faster development of socially organized agricultural production.[41] The restructuring of agricultural production, breeding, and farming was to be achieved through changes in the crop structure and the concentration of livestock farming. The development of livestock farming, particularly cattle breeding, was encouraged. To this end, better utilization of grasslands was planned, with a focus on more intensive production of grain feed (maize). The goal was for maize to eventually become the most important crop in

38 *Razvoj*, 16.
39 *Izredni občni zbor*, 5. Zakon o združevanju kmetov, 49–63.
40 *Razvoj*, 21, 22, 23.
41 *Izredni občni zbor*, 6.

Slovenia. It was intended to expand at the expense of potatoes, although the total potato yield, due to higher yields per hectare, would not decrease significantly. The production of high-quality meat was to be increased, and efforts were to be made to revive shepherding, sheep farming, fruit orchards, and hop cultivation. Vine growing was also to continue developing.[42] The development of rural tourism and other supplementary industries was to be encouraged, allowing for an increase in income. In crop production, better results were expected through the accelerated introduction of biological and technical innovations, as well as the implementation of modern forms of technological cooperation among peasants, including the introduction of agricultural machinery. Since the introduction of such innovations was more feasible on larger, consolidated land areas, the continuous development of a sense of cooperation among neighbors was emphasized. Within land policy, efforts were to be made to ensure greater flexibility in land consolidation.[43]

During the modernization process, which involves the use of modern machinery and technologies, there were also opportunities to compensate for the decline in the agricultural labor force and to achieve higher productivity. Restrictions on the acquisition of agricultural machinery were lifted for peasants in 1967. Agricultural policy, in the context of insufficient connections between peasants and agricultural organizations that would enable well-organized cooperation among them, and amid increasing demand for food, advocated for the revival of the private agricultural sector through various forms of peasant cooperation, as the entire agricultural sector is crucial for ensuring food security.

AGRICULTURAL EXTENSION SERVICE AND ITS AGENDA AFTER 1970

The Agricultural Extension Service was organized based on the decision to revive socialist cooperatives, following the long-term development concept of agriculture and the food industry adopted in 1968. This concept served as an integral part of the activities of agricultural organizations in achieving long-term and annual production goals at the beginning of the 1970s, structured at three levels – local, regional, and republic.[44]

The nine areas of operation of The Agricultural Extension Service, in its efforts, followed the concept of agricultural policy and its strategic directions developed between 1968 and 1971. The strategic direction of agriculture was to

42 *Razvoj*, 16. *VI. Redni občni zbor*, 6, 7.
43 *Izredni občni zbor*, 12, 13. *Razvoj*, 16.
44 *X. redni občni zbor*, 50. *Kmetijsko zadružništvo*, 51, 52.

increase agricultural production to the level of self-sufficiency in food between 85% and 88%.[45] The so-called Green Plan was to be achieved through the implementation of agricultural development and investment programs for both areas of agricultural ownership.[46] The strategist of agricultural development, the Slovenian Edvard Kardelj, stated at an expanded session of the Economic Council at the beginning of 1974: »We must focus on large-scale socialist agricultural production and cooperation with private peasants. Everything we do must be done in a way that includes and economically connects the peasant into a unified process of collective work«.[47]

With the partial depoliticization of agriculture at the end of the 1960s – when fears of wealthy farmers gradually faded amid a declining rural population, which had dropped to 20% – the communist authorities began to reassess their approach to the sector. They recognized that the persistent post-war lag in agriculture, both in the socially-owned and private sectors, in terms of income and capital accumulation compared to other parts of the economy, could only be addressed through increased investment. This applied not only to the socially-owned agricultural sector but also to the private agricultural sector. Agricultural policy realized the importance of food production for domestic needs and export, as well as the fact that high and higher-quality yields could primarily be ensured by adhering to the findings of agricultural sciences, which could only be monitored and applied by trained peasants. The priority task of the Agricultural Extension Service was therefore to assist the previously neglected or excluded private agricultural sector in gaining access to modern agricultural technological knowledge and modernization through advice and education on new farming techniques, thereby helping to increase agricultural production. The Agricultural Extension Service was defined as the most important element of the basic units of agricultural organizations, tasked with organizing and promoting (ordered) market cooperative production through the introduction of new technologies into agricultural production.[48]

The Agricultural Extension Service was supposed to ensure the transfer of new knowledge and technological findings into practice, as well as to facilitate the connection and cooperation among private peasants, and between peasants and agricultural organizations or the parent cooperative organization. This would help develop more modern production methods, increase marketable output, achieve greater productivity, and generate higher income.[49]

45 *Razvoj*, 14, 23.
46 *Kmečki glas*, January 30, 1974, No. 4, 6, Zeleni načrt je stvar celotne družbe 1.
47 *Kmečki glas*, March 27, 1974, No. 12, 1, Edvard Kardelj o osnovnih vprašanjih kmetijstva. Oboje je pomembno: kmet in družbena proizvodnja.
48 Barbič, *Kmetov vsakdan*, 223.
49 *Poročilo Zadružne zveze SR Slovenije 1972–1976*, 20.

The Agricultural Extension Service had already been operating before this, as a result of the unification of agricultural cooperatives in 1952. The predecessor of today's Cooperative Union of Slovenia (Zadružna zveza Slovenije (ZZS), the Main Cooperative Union of Slovenia (Glavna zadružna zveza Slovenije (GZZS), established in the summer of 1952, paid attention to the agricultural extension service and the establishment of specialized extension committees for individual agricultural sectors (such as livestock, fruit growing, viticulture, and crop farming committees, as well as committees for mechanization, plant protection, forestry, trade, import, and export, etc.) from its founding onward. The committees for the extension of individual agricultural sectors remained under the auspices of the GZZS until the end of 1957, when they, as professional committees, were transferred to the Cooperative Business Union of Slovenia (Zadružna poslovna zveza Slovenije). In the spring of 1960, they were moved to the Chamber of Agriculture and Forestry of the People's Republic of Slovenia (Zbornica za kmetijstvo in gozdarstvo Ljudske republike Slovenije (LRS).[50]

During the period of neglect of agricultural cooperatives in the 1960s, the effectiveness of the Agricultural Extension Service in transferring scientific discoveries and knowledge to the broader agricultural practice was minimal. The application of agricultural science findings, due to the belief that the socially-owned agricultural sector would ensure food security, was only accessible to the socially-owned agricultural sector. In contrast, the use of scientific achievements in agricultural sciences for individual farms, i.e., the private agricultural sector, was not encouraged unless it was directly linked to the intermediary role of cooperatives or the socially-owned agricultural sector. The Agricultural Extension Service, which was intended to disseminate scientific innovations and modern agricultural practices, was effectively paralyzed.[51]

By the early 1970s, the revitalized and modernized Agricultural Extension Service had developed extensive professional and educational activities over the previous two decades of the socialist period. The service focused its efforts on introducing technical and biological innovations into widespread practice, providing guidance and professional assistance to market-oriented farms, and connecting peasants to various farming communities.[52] In its efforts, it connected with other activities of cooperative organizations, internal production and administrative organization, the organization and operation of credit and savings services, as well as processing and trading companies.[53]

50 Čeferin, Organizacija, 33, 34.
51 Mlinar, Sociologija, 903, 904.
52 *XIII. redni občni zbor,* 25.
53 Organizacije združenih kmetov, 11.

The agenda of the Agricultural Extension Service encompassed three types of tasks. The first group of tasks focused on intensifying the production of each peasant. Plant production was to be increased through the greater use of fertilizers, high-quality seeds of productive varieties, herbicides, crop protection agents, and improvements in individual production technologies such as sowing dates, crop rotations, and supplementary fertilization. In livestock farming, measures included the expansion of artificial insemination, increased control of dairy cow productivity, faster renewal of the breeding herd, breeding of pedigree heifers, the introduction of new feeding technologies, grazing-harvesting systems, multiple mowings of meadows, the inclusion of forage plants in crop rotations, intensifying crop production with additional and winter crops, and feeding livestock based on nutritional needs and production capacity. The Agricultural Extension Service was to include peasants in organized market production by organizing milk collection points, grain and other crop receiving stations, and ensuring the timely supply of quality agricultural materials necessary for farming. The second group of tasks involved rationalizing investments in private agricultural production. The Agricultural Extension Service, within this group of tasks, focused on advising peasants on acquiring machinery, preferably through machinery communities, and on advising regarding the renewal of plantations using unified technologies such as collective protection and fertilization, etc. It also focused on advising on the organization of communal pastures and milk collection points, as well as guiding the organization of land improvement and other cooperative projects. The third group of tasks referred to intensifying and specializing in production on both pure and mixed farms with potential for a shift towards »rational market production«. In some areas, entire villages specialized (e.g., milk production or vegetable farming).[54]

The restructuring of farms into specialized production or breeding was also emphasized in less favorable areas for agricultural development, such as hilly and mountainous regions, as it was believed that this approach would help retain young people in agricultural and forestry activities. With proper equipment and productivity, specialized farms in these areas were seen as having the potential to compensate for the production decline caused by the aging rural population and its extensive farming methods.[55] On specialized farms, private initiative was also expected to play a role in generating market surpluses in connection with the socially-owned agricultural sector.[56]

54 Organizacije združenih kmetov, 11.
55 *Poročilo Zadružne zveze SR Slovenije 1972–1976,* 29.
56 *Ustanovni občni zbor*, 5, 37, 38.

ORGANIZATION OF THE AGRICULTURAL EXTENSION SERVICE

At the organizational level, the local branches of the Agricultural Extension Service operated within cooperative organizations, representing their basic structural units. At the regional level, the service operated in seven regional agricultural or livestock veterinary institutes in Nova Gorica, Ljubljana, Kranj, Celje, Maribor, Ptuj, and Murska Sobota, as well as at the Hop Research Institute in Žalec (Inštitut za hmeljarstvo Žalec). At the republic level, it was represented by the Republic Center for Agricultural Extension (Republiški center za pospeševanje kmetijstva), established in 1975, within the Cooperative Union of Slovenia.[57]

The basic network of the Agricultural Extension Service within cooperative organizations gradually improved, both in terms of staff numbers and professional expertise. This development was enabled mainly by co-financing from the republic's intervention fund and municipal funds for agricultural interventions. By the early 1980s, the service had begun to take on the characteristics of a technological support structure for cooperative production. Extension workers increasingly took on the role of technological advisors, particularly within peasant production communities.[58] By 1982, after twelve years of operation and at the peak of its staffing capacity, the Agricultural Extension Service began incorporating the technological services of socially-owned farms into its unified extension program, thereby expanding beyond its earlier focus on private peasants.[59] In response to the growing need for specialist involvement – driven by the increasing number of market-oriented farms and peasant production communities – the Agricultural Extension Service operated at multiple organizational levels. At the level of cooperatives, agronomists served as specialized advisors. At the lower level of cooperative units – smaller organizational units within individual cooperatives – and in broader production areas, the service relied on more broadly trained agricultural experts or veterinarians. The number of specialists, including engineers, agronomists, veterinarians, and technicians, increased from 252 in 1980 to 553 in 1986.[60] Extension workers were responsible for organizing cooperative production. At the same time, more demanding technical issues were addressed either through the cooperative's own team of specialized advisors or by engaging specialists from regional agricultural institutes.[61] Within agricultural cooperatives, extension workers organized training courses and led discussion groups for peasants. They also conducted production-oriented demonstration

57 *XIII. redni občni zbor*, 29, 50.
58 *Kmetijsko zadružništvo,* 52.
59 *XIII. redni občni zbor,* 25.
60 *XV. redni občni zbor,* 29.
61 *Kmetijsko zadružništvo,* 52.

trials – such as on field crops and grasslands – facilitated visits to demonstrations of modern technologies, new facilities, land improvements, and similar innovations, organized professional excursions, and guided the work of production communities.[62]

The core network of the Agricultural Extension Service within cooperative organizations, along with the technological services on socially-owned farms, was complemented by professional departments in the form of development and extension units operating within regional agricultural institutes.[63] Specialist experts from the seven regional institutes and the Hop Research Institute collaborated with extension workers in agricultural cooperatives and with technologists at socially-owned estates. These professional services represented interlinked specialized activities: selection services, introduction plantations, nurseries, design offices, breeding centers for male seed animals, artificial insemination, veterinary services, hail defense, veterinary diagnostic laboratories, as well as pedological and enological laboratories (Maribor, Žalec, Nova Gorica, Murska Sobota), educational centers (Agricultural School in Nova Gorica/Kmetijska šola Nova Gorica), and extension departments.[64]

Some activities in regional institutes had a distinctly service-oriented character and operated entirely on commercial principles (nurseries, laboratories, design offices). Other activities, such as the selection service, veterinary service, and extension service, were fully aligned with the goals and tasks of agricultural organizations in their respective areas, which the basic network of the Agricultural Extension Service within cooperative organizations was unable to achieve.[65] The regional institutes also carried out demonstration production and other field-based professional interventions.

By the mid-1980s, when the extension program employed five crop production specialists, ten livestock specialists, seven home economics extension advisors, four fruit-growing specialists, and two viticulture specialists,[66] it was assessed that the regional specialist service was too weak. Although the Agricultural Extension Service was increasingly staffed with agricultural experts at all levels over time, fewer extension workers worked exclusively and full-time on extension tasks than the total number formally employed within the service. In 1977, nearly 76% of extension workers were employed on extension tasks for half the time. By the end of 1982, 61% of those employed in the Agricultural Extension Service were exclusively focused on agricultural extension tasks. Employees in

62 *XVII. redni občni zbor,* 36.
63 *XIII. redni občni zbor*, 25. *Kmetijsko zadružništvo*, 53.
64 *Poročilo upravnega odbora za X. redni občni zbor*, 53.
65 *Kmetijsko zadružništvo,* 53.
66 Organizacije združenih kmetov, 14.

the Agricultural Extension Service were also heads of basic cooperative organizations or cooperative units. They also performed bookkeeping tasks, managed statistics, and conducted milking controls.[67] The work of extension workers was not limited to field visits; although direct contact with peasants and individual counseling were among the most effective forms of extension work. They also purchased livestock and agricultural products, collected orders from peasants for the necessary farming materials, and ensured that the ordered goods were delivered to the peasants. Agricultural extension workers also equipped and maintained milk collection centers, kept records of market produce from cooperators, issued order forms, assessed damage caused by various natural disasters, and damage caused by wildlife, etc.[68]

Co-financing from republican funds enabled the strengthening of the regional specialist agricultural extension service during the 1980s by employing narrowly focused experts and expanding its activities to include plant protection, feed consulting, barn design, pig farming, and milk hygiene. The aim was to establish closer integration with services for selection, reproduction, and veterinary prevention, as well as to improve the training of specialist staff.

Efforts were also to be made to equip regional institutes with appropriate technical resources, including audiovisual aids, computers, and laboratory equipment.[69]

In the specialized services, experts with different profiles worked as a team to resolve specific technical issues in narrower areas. One of the most essential tasks of the institute's specialized service was mentoring trainees for extension workers in agricultural cooperatives and technologists at social agricultural enterprises.[70]

Specialist experts also advised farms, taught extension workers from agricultural cooperatives and technologists, and lectured adult education students. They also conducted field lectures for peasants and organized production demonstration trials, excursions, and lectures for both professionals and peasants, as well as visits to demonstration production and breeding sites. Additionally, they published professional articles and guidelines. They participated in the work of peasant women's initiatives within cooperative organizations and youth groups of cooperators. They also took care of their own further education.[71]

At the top of the Agricultural Extension Service structure stood the Republic Center for Agricultural Extension at the Cooperative Union of Slovenia. It coordinated and collected initiatives for the development of extension programs

67 Barbič, *Kmetov vsakdan*, 224.
68 Ibid, 226.
69 *XIII. redni občni zbor,* 29, 30, 50. Organizacije združenih kmetov, 14, 15.
70 *XV. redni občni zbor,* 30, 31.
71 *XVII. redni občni zbor,* 36, 37.

for cooperative organizations and regional institutes, and – working with expert groups from research and educational institutions – it also developed the national extension program. When designing the national agricultural extension program, priorities had to be given to professional tasks, appropriate methods for transferring knowledge and experience into wide practice, involving collaborators from regional institutes and specialists in production, as well as organizing demonstration fields with optimal agro-technical practices. The expert groups defined the specific responsible parties and implementation deadlines within the national agricultural extension program. Research and educational institutions were expected to provide advisory, mentoring, and instructional support to the basic agricultural extension network within cooperative organizations. Thus, the Republic Center for Agricultural Extension coordinated the professional and developmental work of agricultural extension services at all levels of agricultural organizations and occasionally involved experts from the Agricultural Institute of Slovenia (Kmetijski inštitut Slovenije), the Biotechnical Faculty (Biotehniška fakulteta), and the Higher Agricultural School in Maribor (Višja agronomska šola Maribor). Collaborators from research and educational institutions were only occasionally involved in the implementation of the agricultural extension program as part of industry-specific expert groups. In carrying out the agricultural extension program, they worked with practical education in the form of direct work in cooperative organizations, agricultural extension workshops, regional demonstration plots, professional meetings and seminars, training sessions, and excursions. They also prepared expert content for journals, radio, and television, and provided consultations on farms and socially-owned estates. The Republic Center for Agricultural Extension was the organizer of all forms of knowledge and experience transfer in agreement with the expert groups.[72] It also organized various consultations, courses, seminars, and demonstrations.

The extension workers, that is, the experts of the agricultural extension service, were organizationally, programmatically, and operationally connected through a unified extension program.[73] Throughout its existence, the Agricultural Extension Service was also characterized by a high turnover of highly educated experts, meaning that newly hired specialists had difficulty replacing the departing extension specialists.[74]

At the beginning of the transition in 1990, the Agricultural Extension Service was transferred from cooperative organizations to the Secretariat for Agriculture, which is now part of the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry, and Food. This meant

72 *XIII. redni občni zbor,* 30, 50. Organizacije združenih kmetov, 16.
73 *Kmetijsko zadružništvo,* 52.
74 *XIII. redni občni zbor*, 27.

the establishment of a public agricultural advisory service for the Republic of Slovenia.[75] At the same time, due to the demands for higher education, the number of specialists in the Agricultural Advisory Service decreased. From 457 specialists employed in the Agricultural Extension Service in 1989, their number dropped to 357 in 1990.[76]

CONCLUSION

The shift in agricultural policy in the early 1970s, focusing on the development of both agricultural ownership sectors, the revival of socialist agricultural cooperatives, and the revitalization, modernization, and organization of the Agricultural Extension Service with its direct involvement in agricultural production, was a key factor in the economic growth of agricultural production.[77] By the end of the socialist era, the results of agriculture, achieved based on the long-term development concept of agriculture and the food-processing industry established in the early 1970s, had managed to approach the ambitious Green Plan, with a food self-sufficiency rate of 85% to 88%. By 1990, domestic agriculture met approximately 82% of Slovenia's food needs. However, self-sufficiency was not fully aligned with demand. On one hand, Slovenia produced too little grain, oil, and sugar, while on the other hand, it produced too much milk, beef, and poultry. In terms of wheat production, Slovenia achieved yields 15% lower per hectare compared to Austria, and 30% lower for maize. In milk production per cow, Slovenia was around 45% below the European average, although milk yields improved by 40% after 1975. The profitability of agricultural production in 1988, for example, reached only about 60% of the average profitability of the Slovenian economy. The price ratios between agricultural products and production inputs were less favorable than the average in the European Economic Community at the time.[78]

75 Kovačič, Kmetijstvo, 163, 164.
76 *XIX. redni občni zbor,* 4, 14.
77 *XV. redni občni zbor,* 28.
78 Kovačič, Kmetijstvo, 163, 164.

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Return of the fishermen of the Riba Cooperative from Izola, Slovenia, 1950.

Photo: Zvone Mahovič, courtesy of: Museum of Contemporary History of Slovenia.

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From a review by Dr Zdenko Čepič

The publication contains eight original scientific articles by eight authors (one of the contributions is co-authored), which examine the phenomenon of agricultural policy in countries that, from the end of World War II until the early 1990s, had socialist political systems. [...] The volume presents Soviet agricultural collectivization during Stalin's rule, which served as a model for collectivization in countries that were, after World War II, under Soviet influence (dominance). It also explores the differences in the practice of collectivization in these countries compared to the Soviet Union. [...] The collection is a valuable contribution to understanding the history of agricultural collectivization as a characteristic feature of the socialist period, which became deeply ingrained in the collective memory of countries with socialist systems after World War II.

Back cover:
Fruit-growing and agricultural peasant working cooperative in Osojnik near Ptuj, Slovenia, the cooperative president overseeing work in the potato field, 1949.
Photo: Jože Mally, courtesy of: Museum of Contemporary History of Slovenia.

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