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# 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<sup>1</sup>, László Balogh explored what happened in one settlement through interviews<sup>2</sup>, and Levente Benkő used archival sources in addition to interviews for his study regarding one settlement.<sup>3</sup> Another known participant, József Bende, has published a volume of memoirs<sup>4</sup>. 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.

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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 north-west 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 17<sup>th</sup> century by the union of three smaller seats.<sup>5</sup>

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.<sup>6</sup> 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.), *Székel föld 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<sup>7</sup> and Barót Basins<sup>8</sup>, 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.<sup>9</sup> 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.<sup>10</sup>

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.), *Székelőföld 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.<sup>11</sup> 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.<sup>12</sup> 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.<sup>13</sup> 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.<sup>14</sup> At least 8,676 cadastral holds of land were distributed.<sup>15</sup> According to the 1948 agricultural survey, after the land reform, 47,307 landowners shared 224,936 parcels, distributed as follows.<sup>16</sup>

Table 2: Distribution of landowners in Háromszék County in 1948

Number of land- owners	Distribution of landowners according to the size of the land owned																	
	<5,000 m²	%	5.000 m²–1 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 m <sup>2</sup>	%	5,001 m <sup>2</sup> –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).<sup>17</sup> 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.<sup>18</sup> 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,

<sup>17</sup> Golopentia and Georgescu, *Populația*, 40.

<sup>18</sup> 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.<sup>19</sup>

In Hâromszék 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.<sup>20</sup> 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<sup>21</sup> or the easing of tax burdens.<sup>22</sup> 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 Hâromszék County in October 1950 as follows: »[...] the poor people in the villages were completely neglected. [...] we found poor peasants and agrarian

<sup>19</sup> Levy, *Primul val*, 66–75.

<sup>20</sup> Statutul model al gospodăriei agricole colective [The model charter of the collective farms.].

<sup>21</sup> Farmers enrolled in the collective economy received goods in the cooperative stores that were not given to locals who were not enrolled.

<sup>22</sup> 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.<sup>23</sup> 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.<sup>24</sup> 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.<sup>25</sup> 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.<sup>26</sup> During the first phase of the organization, members of the county party bureau gathered information about the designated villages.<sup>27</sup> By the end of March, 29 villages had been examined, and 14 were selected for the organization of collective farms.<sup>28</sup> 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.<sup>29</sup> 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.<sup>30</sup> 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.<sup>31</sup> By this time, administrative pressure tactics were employed, such as forced labor, harassment,<sup>32</sup> 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).

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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.<sup>33</sup> 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.<sup>34</sup> Most of the smallholders followed suit, but the land exchange documentation was signed under the supervision of the Militia.<sup>35</sup>

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.<sup>36</sup> 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!«<sup>37</sup> After these events, the Securitate arrested several suspects.<sup>38</sup> 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.<sup>39</sup> 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.<sup>40</sup>

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.<sup>41</sup> The collective farm inauguration occurred on July 2, 1950. At the same time, the authorities took a couple from the village.<sup>42</sup>

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.<sup>43</sup> 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.<sup>44</sup> 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.«<sup>45</sup> 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.<sup>46</sup>

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.<sup>47</sup> 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.<sup>48</sup> 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.<sup>49</sup>

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.<sup>50</sup> At least two properties were confiscated in this village for the collective farm.<sup>51</sup> 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.<sup>52</sup> Here, the owner of the house selected as the collective farm's headquarters was imprisoned, and his property was confiscated.<sup>53</sup> Another place where both incentive and pressure tactics were used is Dálnok.<sup>54</sup>

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.<sup>55</sup> 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.<sup>56</sup>

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.«<sup>57</sup>

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).<sup>58</sup> But resisters were also threatened with forced labor in Mikóújfalú.<sup>59</sup> 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-SJMş, 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 Cătănuş 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.<sup>60</sup> To secure the necessary property, two farmers were also imprisoned here, and their families were relocated out of the village.<sup>61</sup> 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.<sup>62</sup>

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.<sup>63</sup>

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.<sup>64</sup> 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.<sup>65</sup> 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.<sup>66</sup> 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.<sup>67</sup> 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.<sup>68</sup>

Two days later, on September 7, an anti-collectivization protest took place in Zalán.<sup>69</sup> During the following days, starting on September 9 or 10, anti-collectivization protests also took place in Dálnok, lasting a day or two.<sup>70</sup> 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.<sup>71</sup> 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.<sup>72</sup> 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-SJMş, 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.<sup>73</sup>

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.<sup>74</sup> After this, the protesters went to the collective farm leader's house and forced the family to leave the village.<sup>75</sup> 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.<sup>76</sup> At the end of the protest, the warehouse worker of the collective farm returned the seeds that had been collected for the collective farm.<sup>77</sup>

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.<sup>78</sup>

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.<sup>79</sup> 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.<sup>80</sup>

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<sup>81</sup> 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.<sup>82</sup>

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 Cătănuș 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.<sup>83</sup> 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.<sup>84</sup> 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.<sup>85</sup> 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.<sup>86</sup> 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.<sup>87</sup> 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.<sup>88</sup>

## 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: Sepsiaráros, 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.<sup>89</sup> The detainees were taken to the Braşov railway station, where some of them were loaded into freight cars and sent to Dobruja. Those considered instigators were forwarded to the Braşov fortress, the Securitate detention facility. During the winter, female prisoners were transferred from the fortress to the Braşov city prison, where conditions were more favorable. Between February and March 1951, some prisoners were sentenced by the Braşov 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 Braşov train station, where they were placed in freight cars and transported to Dobruja. There, they were assigned to various villages (Ovidiu, Caşimcea, Cocoş, Hamangia, Lunca) and became employees of state farms.<sup>90</sup>

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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 <sup>91</sup>	Families were deported at an unknown time <sup>92</sup>
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-SJM§, § 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.<sup>93</sup>

## 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-SJM§, § 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.<sup>94</sup> 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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<sup>94</sup> ANR-SAIC, CC-Agr. 79/1950, 15.

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