The Impact of Sovietization: A case study of the Hungarian peasantry under Stalinism

By

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Abstract

This thesis aims to reintroduce a previously ignored resource into modern-day social studies, namely 600 interviews conducted in 1957/8 by Columbia University with Hungarian refugees, into the academic discourse of the post-Soviet period. The author examines the social effects generated by the imposition of the Soviet model in Hungary upon the middle peasantry, using the period of Stalinization (1948-1953) as a backdrop. The thesis describes an ideological transformation in the peasantry's traditional understanding of work, politics, the family unit, and social interaction, pointing to unfavourable economic conditions of Hungary's command economy as providing the catalyst for change. The result is an analysis that portrays both a duality in the demeanour of the peasantry, as well as a divergence from traditional social attitudes to a much more liberalized atmosphere, particularly amongst the younger generation. Both effects are determined to have been heavily influenced by government-initiated social engineering campaigns. In the broader context, this study provides an analysis of a peasant society in its transitional period under Communism, an often neglected topic amongst English-language sources.

Acknowledgment Page

I would like to thank Professor Constantin Iordachi, whose invaluable assistance throughout the research process and comprehension of anthropological methods has contributed to diversifying my own approach. Additionally, I wish to extend my gratitude to the staff at the Open Society Archives in Budapest for providing accessibility to the archival material that forms the foundation of this project. Last, I wish to confer a special acknowledgement to my grandparents Annie and Nicholas Essig, whose childhood experience provided the inspiration for this sojourn into the past.

Men make their own history, but they do not make it just as they please; they do not make it under circumstances chosen by themselves, but under circumstances directly encountered, given and transmitted from the past.[1]

- Karl Marx

[1] Nigel Swain, "From kolkhoz to holding company: a Hungarian agricultural producer co-operative in transition." *Journal of Historical Sociology* 13, no. 2 (June 2000): 143.

Table of Contents

Introduction

> Russians go home! Abolish crop deliveries! Abolish progressive taxation for the farmer! Use the Kossuth coat of arms! Reveal secret trade agreements! These may sound surprising from peasants, but to keep at all ahead economically the peasants had to start to read and think and he became rather sophisticated.[2]

The above depiction of the Hungarian peasantry by Columbia University's interview Subject No. 406 is expressive of a broader social change developed over several years of forced collectivization and state oppression during the incipient yet rapid Sovietization of Hungary's rural population. Moscow's decision to implement mass collectivization throughout the Soviet satellites in 1949 introduced terror, hardship, and an upheaval of social change, which eventually transformed traditional peasant society. The changing nature of the peasantry as a social group under Stalinization has garnered little attention in the past years from academics, with the exception of a number of compelling case studies of the Soviet Union. Historians, such as Sheila Fitzpatrick and Lynne Viola, have brought both much-needed attention and literature on the social impact of agricultural reforms and collectivization attempts in the Soviet Union, but with little reverberation into other Sovietized states.

In the case of Hungary, the literature is particularly meagre, with the exception of a number of social anthropologists such as Nigel Swain, Chris Hann, and Peter Bell. While this may change after the recent rise of interest in Hungary in the wake of the 50th anniversary of the 1956 Revolution, such interest has yet to materialize. Regardless of this new wave of historical examination, there remains a lack of exploration into the social impact of collectivization upon the peasantry within the satellite state of Hungary after

[2] Columbia University Research Project on Hungary, *Donald and Vera Blinken Collection – Hungarian refugee Interviews from 1957-1958*. OSA Archivum <http://www.osa.ceu.hu/digitalarchive/blinken/index.html> (accessed November 12, 2006). Subject File No. 406.

1945. The bulk of the literature that does exist is not concerned with unravelling the social impacts of agricultural policy in Hungary but is preoccupied in exploring the causal effects that led to the 1956 Hungarian Revolution, dispensing with a thorough understanding of how the imposition of a command economy, collectivization, and social engineering was experienced by the peasantry.[3]

In Harris L. Coulter's 1959 article, entitled "The Hungarian Peasantry", the author explains that the introduction of complete Communist hegemony in 1949 began the "baptismal" entry of the peasantry into national politics. This new dimension, Coulter argues, changed the way the peasantry viewed itself in relation to not only the government but also in relation to the urban environment and the world beyond Hungary's borders. Investigation of this dimension of the Hungarian experience would provide for an understanding of how the radical economic policies directly affected the development, attitude, and organization of the Hungarian peasantry. In addition, it would allow for increased discourse pertaining to the behavioural changes, or lack thereof, regarding the peasantry's view on their status within the Soviet order, both in Hungary, and more broadly throughout the Soviet bloc.

The purpose of this thesis will be to perform an in-depth analysis of the interviews conducted by Columbia University's Research Project on Hungary in order to explore the social changes in the human condition of the Hungarian peasantry in the spheres of labour, politics, and social values, against the backdrop of the collectivization drive of 1949-1953. The decision to limit the areas of examination to these three spheres is based on the data available in the interviews, and the prevalence of these three topics in the responses of the subjects. The focal areas of this essay fall into three categories: (1) the relationship of the peasantry to politics, specifically regarding the local village council and the Communist

[3] Harris L. Coulter, "The Hungarian Peasantry: 1948-1956", *American Slavic and East European Review* 18, no. 4 (Dec., 1959): 539.

Party; (2) the creation of a hybrid peasant-worker, with special attention to the process of class integration, changing work ethics, and self-sufficiency, and; (3) social values and interpersonal relations of the family unit, and changing norms regarding courtship and delinquent activity.

This study aims to satisfy curiosities surrounding why the peasantry pursued certain courses of action in the face of an aggressive Soviet-style collectivization campaign, such as abandoning their long-cherished land holds for traditionally stigmatized employment in industry. Social scientist Jon Elster indicates in his article "Nuts and Bolts for the Social Sciences", that rational thought does not always enter into the decision-making process when atypical situations arise. Elster continues explaining that, "we do not understand why they [individuals] do so unless we study the small *mechanisms* which made them act individually as they did [original emphasis]".[4] In fact, the small mechanism to which Elster refers describes quite accurately the focus of this thesis. Changes in morality, lifestyle and practices associated with a command economy will assist in documenting the transition to the socialist social-political regime in subsequent periods of Hungary's history.

The cumulative Subject Files (SF) represents a broad spectrum of backgrounds and regions throughout Hungary (see Figure 1 and 2 in Appendix). While the majority of the people included in this study hail from western Hungary, there is also a notable presence from eastern Hungary as well. The mean age of the 31 subjects is 30 years old and the average age is 29, providing a respectable balance of individuals who were deeply involved in the prewar system of agriculture and community life as much as those who were had little experience in the pre-Soviet environment. However, the subjects included in this study are overwhelmingly representative of the small landholders and middle peasants, with only one landless peasant and one large landowner contributing to their class' experiences. Since a

[4] Jon Elster, *Nuts and Bolts for the Social* Sciences (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992): 10.

large amount of literature pertaining to the general disposition of the Hungarian peasantry regarding their material and economic lifestyle is available it is possible to distinguish the typical experiences from the more unique or isolated cases presented during the analysis of the interviews.

It deserves mention that what I am pursuing is not a unique approach in the field of Hungarian historiography. Paul Kecskemeti's publication entitled *The Unexpected Revolution*, comes very close to completing a similar social analysis of the Columbia University Research Project on Hungary (henceforth referred to as CURPH) interviews. Kecskemeti aims, "to show the interrelated social and political effects both of the forcible imposition of the Stalinist pattern and of its disintegration".[5] While having one eye fixed upon the 1956 Uprising, Kecskemeti's focus is upon the latter half of these aims, which prevents him from completing a comprehensive analysis of the experiences of the peasantry under collectivization. The majority of historians who focus their attention on this area of research tend to ignore or deviate from incorporating first-hand accounts in their own works, preferring to rely upon official documents to those of a more personal and frankly bias-prone nature.[6] The issue of oral sources and their reliability is thoroughly addressed in the next chapter. The essence of this study is most similar to the ambitions of the "village explorers" of Hungary's interwar period, who endeavoured to produce "literature which was primarily concerned with the conditions of the village peasants, of the landless peasants, and of the agricultural servants".[7] Although the circumstances and ruling body have changed since these various writers and sociologists embarked upon their quest, the interest herein is quite the same.

[5] Paul Kecskemeti, *The Unexpected Revolution: social forces in the Hungarian* Uprising (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1961): v.
[6] Andrea Graziosi, *The Great Soviet Peasant War: Bolsheviks and Peasants, 1917-1933*. (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1996): 4/31.
[7] SF No. 152.

Many researchers who worked within the framework of CURPH were either Kremlinologists or associated with the Totalitarian School and, in light of new methods of analysis, the subject of social change under Communism requires a fresh re-examination inclusive of newly released archival evidence, previously ignored sources in the form of oral records, and new historical approaches that have emerged in the last 30 years. As historian Constantin Iordachi pointedly notes, such methodological approaches as the modernization theory of the 1960s and 1970s severely limited the possibility of historians to understand the impact of collectivization since such experiences were disregarded "as an appendix to [interpreting] broader social and political processes" instead of the processes being studied in and of themselves as an integral part of the human experience within Sovietization.[8]

Social anthropologists, starting in the early 1970s, began to focus on internal processes within the Soviet bloc and the systems of social relations and changes that were generated within socialist society.[9] After numerous ventures into Hungarian villages, and extensive fieldwork, anthropologists such as Bell, Hann, and Swain were able to reconstruct various social perceptions and realities by combining first-hand accounts and local records. Although their works are limited to case studies of individual villages and typically avoid periodization in favour of analyzing the dynamics and the evolution of ongoing processes not restricted by particular epochs, they still provide a source of valuable information on the early perceptions of Hungarian peasant society and the trends that survived or were altered by various economic policies.[10] Interestingly enough, the social turn in anthropology towards understanding the dynamics of various social facets of Hungarian peasant life via

[8] Dorin Dobrincu and Constantin Iordachi, eds. *Ţărănimea şi puterea: Procesul de colectivizare a agriculturii în România, 1949-1962* (The Peasantry and the Power: The Process of Land Collectivization in Romania, 1949-1962) (Iaşi: Polirom, 2005): 5.
[9] Dobrincu and Iordachi, eds. *Ţărănimea şi puterea: Procesul de colectivizare a agriculturii în România, 1949-1962*: 5.
[10] C. M. Hann, ed. *Socialism: ideas, ideologies, and the local practice*. (London: Routledge, 1993): 17.

oral sources has not yet appeared in Hungarian historiography. There have been attempts to break away from traditional topics of exploration within Hungarian historiography, notably by Zsuzsanna Varga, but aside from a number of her publications, the topic of the Hungarian peasantry's life under collectivization remains a dismal area of exploration, leaving many questions unanswered.

My own research questions will be answered by an examination of the CURPH interviews available at the Open Society Archives (OSA), located in Budapest. The structure and organisation of the interview scripts lend themselves favourably to analysis. The interviews are comprised of several sections, categorized according to the themes of personal life and work experience; social problems and education; ideology, attitudes and opinions; as well as possible government, party, and police affiliations. The scopes of the questions comprising each section are extensive and cover numerous topics, allowing for a comprehensive study of everyday life and prevailing perceptions on social order.

The context of my work will primarily focus on reconstructing certain facets of the Hungarian experience as expressed through these accounts. Complementary to the CURPH interviews are the records of Radio Free Europe, which contain summary reports on the listening habits of the Hungarian population.

The New Turn, Oral History, and Social Anthropology

For the sake of clarity, it is worth explicating a number of terminologies that will appear throughout the essay, namely, the terms Sovietization, collectivization, and peasantry. First, Sovietization refers to the complete restructuring of the political, economic, and social system of Hungary into a centralized state along characteristically Stalinist lines, being preoccupied with mass social engineering and concentrating resources into heavily industrializing the nation, including collectivization.[11] Also, it refers to a command economy in direct opposition to both the incipient capitalist market trends of pre-Soviet Hungary and the consumption patterns of the population. Second, the definition for collectivization will be borrowed from anthropologist Nigel Swain, and refer to agriculture's "radical, large-scale, socio-economic transformation" in Hungary starting in 1949. [12] Last, the term peasantry requires a unique description since the term encapsulates not only the traditional meaning of the non-wage earning agrarian family unit, but also the cross-section provided in the CURPH collection. The first part of the definition will indicate individuals involved in either a family labour farm or socialist wage labour within agriculture.[13] The second half of the definition denotes a group of individuals self-identified as hailing from peasant origins or rural areas, who left Hungary in the aftermath of the 1956 Revolution, and agreed to share their experiences of everyday life under the Hungarian (Workers') Communist Party. Additionally, it refers more specifically to the smallholder and middle peasant, who represent 80 percent of the Subject Files employed in this study. It

[11] Lynne Viola, *Peasant Rebels under Stalin: Collectivization and the Culture of Peasant Resistance*. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996): vii
[12] Nigel Swain, *Collective Farms which Work?* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985): 2.
[13] For further explanation on 'family labour farm' or 'socialist wage labour' see C. M. Hann's *Social Anthropology*. (Coventry: Hodder & Stoughton, 2000),: 68, and Swain's *Collective Farms which Work?*: 6, respectively.

is also important to note that none of the Subjects included in this study were involved with the collective or state farms, but attempted to eke out an existence outside of State control.

The structural framework and methodology of the present study will primarily rely upon a combination of socio-historical and socio-anthropological templates. The paper follows a thematic narrative style, with a highly focused lens on changing social structures and relations of the individual Hungarian peasant via the adaptation and integration of various Soviet economic policies. Stratification of existing social studies categorized into headings such as labour, politics, and values, is typical of both socio-anthropological and socio-historical literature pertaining to rural-centric academic works. While historical studies typically operate with "an eye to unchanging structures or to sweeping transformations", anthropological works in this genre attempt to provide the reader with insight to the intricacies of changing social structures and relations with a more ambivalent attitude towards rigid or finite periodization.[14] The methodology of this study also provides a synthesis of the current literature between both disciplines.

Although social historians have contributed prolific works to our understanding of the Hungarian peasantry's experience under Soviet economic reforms and attempts at large-scale social engineering, there is a significant absence of direct testimonial on the part of the peasants they have studied, despite the availability of such source material. As a result, historians have failed to provide illustration regarding the changing nature of the peasantry in Hungary *as experienced by the peasants* in the early phase of sovietization. This is not to say that they have failed in their individual aims. On the contrary, historical works such as Fitzpatrick's *Stalin's Peasants* or Viola's *Peasant Rebels under Stalin* have both managed to capture quite vividly the essence of everyday life in Russia during that country's most brutal period of collectivization. In anthropological studies, cases involving Hungary are typically

[14] Martha Lampland, "Pigs, Party Secretaries, and Private Lives in Hungary." *American Ethnologist* 18, no. 3, (Aug., 1991): 459.

limited in focus on a single rural community or relying upon a non-transient population able to provide experiences and accounts encapsulating several decades, explicating varying reciprocal influences between the individual, their environment, and the state apparatus.[15]

The approaches of social anthropologists, who attempt to provide the peasantry with a voice, are more concerned with social stratifications and reciprocal relationships, marking a divergence in the interests of social historians and social anthropologists. Additionally, Nigel Swain's work on collective farming and its evolution from prewar Hungary to the beginning of the post-socialist period, as well as Chris Hann's comparative studies of Sovietization in the broader context of Eastern Europe, successfully uncover the social impact accompanying economic planning, as well as the dynamic features of power relations within the farms themselves.

To the great benefit of historians, social anthropologists have collected the testimonies of Hungarian's living within a number of collective farms, but the data typically hails from a few decades after Stalin's death, well into the second and third waves of collectivization. As a result, researchers interested in reconstructing the Hungarian peasant's experience under the first wave of collectivization (1948-1953) must rely upon a combination of social anthropology and oral testimony, such as the CURPH interviews at the center of this study. Both of these characteristics are best defined as part of the "new turn" in history.

The historiography of the 1970s revealed this new turn within the sub-discipline of social history, and called for a change in the widely exercised top-down approach to a history from below approach. The new turn emerged primarily under the patronage of historians concerned with exploring the multifaceted nature of everyday life as experienced by the general population. The reproach from traditional historical genres (such as the Great

[15] Examples of this feature of anthropological studies are provided in the bibliography under the authorship of Bell, Fél & Hofer, and Swain.

Man theory, political/diplomatic history, and economic history) is partially explained by Peter Burke as an attempt to reconcile a deficiency of top-down historians, namely a heavy reliance on official documents for facts; more specifically, the irreconcilable nature of such sources to provide a narrow and official view of the events.[16]

Another reason for the appearance of history from below is the desire amongst previously marginalized sections of the global community to reclaim their pasts, which is well demonstrated in the development of women's history and African-American history. To borrow Burke's definition, the purpose of history from below stands in contrast to top-down history and tries to correct the malaise of traditional history by providing another dimension of the human experience that can provide, in conjunction with previously established literature, a fuller description of the past.[17]

In view of the micro-level analysis that this project entails, a micro-historical approach is incorporated to complement the macro-analysis of the Soviet style economic reforms and its social impacts. The characteristics of micro-historical analysis emerged from anthropological research and are aligned with a (neo-) Marxist approach. The format of microhistory provides "thick description [which] serves to record in written form a series of signifying events" with the intention of illustrating the particular as an expression of the larger picture.[18]

The concept of microhistory, according to Giovanni Levi, involves the "reduction of the scale of observation, on a microscopic analysis and an intensive study of documentary material."[19] This view is considered structuralist in nature, typical of a Marxist framework, but reduced to the level of the individual instead of the masses. In contrast to this approach

[16] Peter Burke, ed. *New Perspectives on Historical Writing*. (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1991): 5.
[17] Burke, ed. *New Perspectives on Historical Writing.*: 32.
[18] Giovanni Levi, "On Microhistory" in *New Perspectives on Historical Writing*, Burke: 98.
[19] Levi in Burke, *New Perspectives on Historical Writing*: 95.

is Alessandro Portelli's thematic approach, whereby the evidence does not simply rely on intensive documentary analysis but includes the use of oral interviews and less traditional records, such as interrogation reports instead of trial transcripts, to create a montage of events interacting with each other that represents a small niche of the larger meta-history.[20] In an effort to take full advantage of the CURPH interviews, an agglomeration of both approaches is employed. The use of oral history and its possible contributions/limitations to this study will receive further discussion later in the chapter.

One of the major criticisms to the approach of microhistory, as pointed out by Levi, is the misconception that the narrow scope required by this approach somehow limits its application to the larger historical context. In an effort to discredit this criticism, he provides the example of the man who goes to buy a loaf of bread and how even such a seemingly menial act possesses a resonance that affects the market price of grain internationally.[21] This concept of interactivity is reminiscent of tossing a pebble into a pond, and watching the impact of a small object ripple into its surroundings, being felt far beyond the reaches of its actual dimensions.

It is perhaps this line of thinking that led members of the Annales School, such as Jacques Revel, to view microhistory and its methods as a means of criticizing and reviewing existing concepts within the Annales. Unlike the bulk of historical writings, meant to fill up the holes of an historical tapestry, microhistory attempts to illustrate diversities and how it forms a mosaic of experiences that are summarily known as a collection of individual experiences.[22] By creating a detailed illustration, microhistory is able to enrich historical context using language specific to the period under analysis as well as bring attention to the

[20] Carlo Ginzburg, *Myth, Emblem and Clues*. Translated by John & Anne C. Tedeschi (Torino: Giulio Einaudi editore s.p.a., 1986): 9.
[21] Levi in Burke, *New Perspectives on Historical Writing*: 96.
[22] Jacques Revel, "Microanalysis and the Construction of the Social", in *Histories*, ed. Jacques Revel and Lynn Hunt, (New York: The New York Press, 1995): 496.

experiences of the individual in juxtaposition with the group it shares a collective identity. This approach, combined with the pre-existing literature on Hungary, explicates the multifarious interpretations of various elements that were affected by collectivization and more broadly the imposition of a command economy, which resulted in a changed outlook of the peasantry both within and without the immediate community.

Information on the development of Hungary prior to the eruption of World War II has been well-established in such academic publications as Ignac Romsics' *István Bethlen: A Great Conservative Statesman of Hungary, 1874–1946*, C.A. MacCartney's *October Fifteenth: A History of Modern Hungary, 1929–1945*, Andrew C. János' *The Politics of Backwardness in Hungary, 1825–1945*, and Gábor Gyáni's *Social History of Hungary from the Reform Era to the End of the Twentieth Century*. The current literature pertaining to the era of Communist rule in Hungary is quite comprehensive as well. Among the sources of information available on this topic are works such as Charles Gati's *Hungary and the Soviet bloc*, János Rainer's "The History of Hungary", Csaba Békés' *The 1956 Hungarian Revolution: A History in Documents*, Lazslo Bohri's *Hungary in the Cold War, 1945-1956*, Bennet Kovrig's *Communism in Hungary: From Kun to Kádár*, and numerous other publications released by the *Cold War International History Project*, published under the auspices of the Woodrow Wilson Centre. While these sources provide information on the political goings-on within Hungary and the Kremlin, it tends to ignore the social implications of various political and economic programs within the social sphere, except in regards to relationships between the regime's activities and the outbreak of the 1956 Revolution.

In addition to these resources are the publications of social anthropologists Bell, Hann, Swain, and Verdery. These works will further afford a sense of what community and domestic life entailed within the collective farms, as well as providing an additional source

of comparative literature to the interviews. In particular, Hann's publication entitled *Social Anthropology* aids in defining a number of social themes that anthropologists employ in their research.

By integrating these interviews into the current body of literature, this study intends to make use of under-researched sources, on a particularly formative period, the 1950s, and to contribute to the understanding of the peasants' perception of politics, labour, and social values. In short, by creating a synthesis of the interviews available with the available literature on the Hungarian peasantry, a fuller description of how the peasants understood their social relations as altered during the first wave of collectivization will emerge.[23] Additionally, this case study will provide a comparative source of analysis for existing works dealing with aspects of Sovietization either within the context of Hungary or throughout similarly transformed societies. In a more general sense, methods for employing sources considered by a number of historians as less reliable – those being of the oral tradition of historical investigation – will have an additional resource to assist in establishing a theoretical framework for their own projects. Of particular interest will be this study's contribution to social anthropology. As previously mentioned, social anthropology has been hindered in its ability to provide an analysis inclusive of experiences as interpreted by the individual within the social sphere that was wrought exclusively within the context of the first wave of collectivization. More broadly, the use of the CURPH collection will bring into view a source of information that has the potential to add significant understanding and context to understanding everyday life behind the Iron Curtain as experienced by the people themselves.

In studying the peasantry of Eastern Europe, any attempt to implement a bottom-up approach is particularly difficult, as evidence provided in trade records, agricultural

[23] Burke, *New Perspectives on Historical Writing*: 32.

production ledgers, and by surviving material artefacts, all suffer from the same deficiency. In the case of Hungary, much of the documentation held in local Party offices pertaining to compulsory delivery quotas, property and goods ownership, and taxes were either confiscated or destroyed by the rural communities during the Revolution of 1956. The piece of the historical puzzle that is grossly absent in most reconstructions of peasant life, according to British social historian Jim Sharpe, is the voice of the peasants themselves.[24] The problem of first-hand testimony in the 20th century is not as irreconcilable as is once was, notably due to the high level of interest in the social sciences in the postwar period, and the expanding methods of acquiring and interpreting data. Although it is impossible to entertain the idea of performing a modern-day survey of the Hungarian Diasporas for the purpose of this study, other sources can be employed to complete this task.

Attention to the social conditions of the peasantry has spread throughout a number of disciplines in the wake of World War II and the ensuing Cold War, spawning several projects concerned with preserving the experiences of groups or individuals previously occupying the lower strata of academic interest. For an example of this development, one need only look at the history of the interviews conducted by the Columbia University Research Project on Hungary (CURPH) and Radio Free Europe / Radio Liberty (RFE) listed in the bibliography of this essay. The inspiration for these interviews was due in part to placate the interests of various Western agencies' to determine the effectiveness of RFE's propaganda campaign within the Soviet bloc, and in the case of CURPH, to get a much-needed glimpse into the diverse and complex relations that defined life behind the Iron Curtain. Since these interviews will hold a special place in this project it is crucial to provide the reasoning behind their preference to other sources of information as well as to address a number of concerns as to the handling such "unofficial" documents as evidence.

[24] Jim Sharpe, "History from Below" in *New Perspectives on Historical Writing*, Peter Burke: 29.

Complementary to the CURPH interviews are the records of RFE, which contain, in addition to summary reports on the listening habits of the Hungarian population, views on a variety of subjects including how different social classes interpreted their quality of life prior to the soviet takeover in 1945. The RFE interviews were conducted in 1956/7 as refugees moved across the Hungarian border and beyond the Soviet bloc. The interviews conducted by CURPH will hold preference over the more numerous interviews recorded under the patronage of RFE, due to the more appropriate timing of the former, its purpose, and its thoroughness. I suspect that the more immediate interviews of RFE will create a less accurate description than that of CURPH's holdings (1957/8) since a number of the interviewees may have felt under duress during the interview so soon after leaving the Soviet bloc and, not having yet secured permanent residence abroad, were more liable to try and satisfy or mislead the interviewers. By contrast, the CURPH interviewees volunteered to undergo the two-day interview process after securing residence in the West, and responded to inquiries specifically directed at understanding Hungarian life behind the Iron Curtain whereas RFE was primarily concerned with determining the success of its own programming.

Additionally, the works of academics directly associated with the production of CURPH will also be consulted, and include authors Paul E. Zinner, Ferenc A. Vali, Harris L. Coulter, and Paul Kecskemeti.[25] All these individuals played substantial roles in the interview process that spanned the United States as well as Western Europe. In the case of Coulter, who held the position of program director, he also assisted in the development of the format and methodology within the interviews. Their cumulative publications, released in 1959 - 1962 are the only studies to date that use the CURPH collection with any

[25] In general, the four individuals responsible for the initial development of the interview system were Kremlinologists Henry Roberts, Paul E. Zinner, and philosopher Siegfried Kracauer, and sociologist Paul Lazarsfeld from the Frankfurt school.

substantial reliance, and as such, Kecskemeti's works will aid in providing a methodological approach for analyzing the interviews.

The information extracted from these interviews is arranged in a fashion as to create a general character sketch of the nature of everyday life of the Hungarian peasant, resulting in a descriptive analysis that can be taken as any individual who lived and experienced the impact wrought by Soviet economic planning and the subsequent adaptation to changes within their social and political perceptions. At the same time, the resulting character sketch will likely not fit anyone at all, since it relies on a collection of experiences, which will differ based on individual interviewee's decisions and on the reasons that motivated him or her to make certain choices.

There are several limitations to this study that must be addressed. First, the number of interviews available for examination within the CURPH collection is limited to 31 files, making this paper primarily qualitative. In addition, the individuals of peasant or rural origins who volunteered for the interview process were predominantly male. Incidentally, this feature also contributes to the greater homogeneity of the source material. However, interviews of female participants will also be included, and grant particular insight to the changes within the family unit.

In addition to the above concerns, there are also questions regarding the usefulness and reliability of interviews. The concerns revolve around bias, credibility, and representativeness. In order to alleviate these concerns as much as possible it is useful to refer to Kecskemeti, alongside a number of psychologists and sociologists, who was also an integral part of both the interview's creation and execution. Kecskemeti claimed the biases of the Subjects were largely diffused by establishing an environment that relied on an informal exchange between the interviewer and interviewee; from the personal arrangement of the CURPH interviews to avoiding any questions that directly pertained to political views

or belief systems.[26] He also indicated that the questions focused upon drawing out personal reminiscences and informal biographical accounts, instead of the more traditional hard-line questions regarding personal opinions on the prevailing system of government. As it pertains to the credibility of the interviews, the responses tend to correspond with other sources of information on the general experiences amongst different social groups, leading the researcher to find no reason in dismissing the results as inaccurate.

The last concern involves representativeness, which Kecskemeti pointedly dismantles by claiming that, "[there is] no reason to assume refugees as a group were atypical in [their experiences]…although self-reflection of the refugees clearly did lead to over- and under representation of many sociological and attitude variables (occupation, religion, party affiliation) one could still not say that the respondents included a large number of marginal or deviant elements within their own social groups".[27] Although this justification may not dismiss all concerns, the structure and quality of the interview process and methodology have since received praise by current academics such as Andras Mink, who comments that regardless of any perceived shortcomings of CURPH, it is nevertheless the best-organized and most comprehensive interview process of its type and scale.[28] However, it is worth pointing out that the interviews displayed biases not only of the interviewees but of CURPH's creators, whose questions reflected "contemporary Western fears of communist propaganda and indoctrination".[29] This shortcoming will be difficult to overcome but by exercising a certain degree of caution it will be possible to arrive at a number of reliable conclusions.

[26] Paul Kecskemeti, *The unexpected revolution: social forces in the Hungarian uprising*. (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1961): 7.
[27] Kecskemeti, *The unexpected revolution: social forces in the Hungarian uprising*: 8.
[28] Andras Mink, *CURPH 1956 Hungarian Refugee Interviews at OSA Archivum*. Budapest: OSA Archivum <http://www.osa.ceu.hu/digitalarchive/blinken/curph.pdf> (4 Nov 2005): 1.
[29] Mink, *CURPH 1956 Hungarian Refugee Interviews at OSA Archivum*: 2.

An important caveat for this thesis is that it does not aim to describe the opinions and behavioural patterns solely of the professional farmers, but of those who indicated themselves to be of peasant origin or rural residence. A brief survey of employment, for example, shows that while some of the peasant class continued in agriculture, others chose to commute or move entirely to urban areas where industrial work and higher wages were to be found.

The release dates of much of the secondary literature provide another reason for further analysis of the Hungarian peasantry. The resources that researchers such as Zinner and Coulter relied upon are from a period when the availability of information on life behind the Iron Curtain was not as ubiquitous as the period following 1989; thus emerges an additional need for a fresh reassessment in view of new archival evidence.

The assertion that the interviews suffer from limitations rooted in outdated sources of information (and thus the publications that emerged from them) is supported by Mink, who observed that the interview project's designers and subsequent researchers "had an obsolete image of an essentially rural and religious Hungarian society and disregarded the urbanization, industrialization and secularization that had been under way long before the communist takeover".[30] By combining the post-communist era archival evidence available in existing publications with the pre-Soviet realities of Hungarian modernization, the initial wave of Stalinist-style agricultural reforms and its social impacts can be better understood.

One of the greatest challenges precipitating from the use of the CURPH interviews is the legitimate concern regarding reliability. Traditional criticism of oral sources arise when an historian relies wholly or too heavily upon the oral interviews, assigning it a primary role over more widely accepted official documents. In the case of the CURPH interviews, the typical methods of oral testimony are inappropriate. Firstly, I am approaching the

[30] Mink, *CURPH 1956 Hungarian Refugee Interviews at OSA Archivum*: 15.

interviews circa 50 years later, which has allowed for two significant developments: detailed criticism by the project's developers on the merits and flaws post-interview and examination of results, as well as more recent comments from historians such as Andras Mink and Istvan Rév. Also, clarity and hindsight that followed the post-1989 period and access to archival resources assist in confirming or denying previous conclusions. Just as the archival records available after the fall of Communism diminished previous uncertainties within the political and socio-economic spheres, the interviews assist in correcting the previously understood social impact of economic policy changes in a defining moment for Hungary in the 20th century.[31]

The interviews do not accommodate the traditional definition of oral history. The extensive nature of the questions combined with its structure and nature make it more of a hybrid between a questionnaire and an interview. Although interview subjects were encouraged to discuss freely their thoughts, the interviewers followed a strict guideline of what questions were to be asked, how they were to be asked, and when they were to be asked, as formulated by numerous academics from the natural and social sciences. This is not to say that leading questions were employed, but a strong attempt was made to ensure a comprehensive study that enquired into numerous aspects of everyday life in Soviet Hungary. Additionally, the wording of the questionnaire itself imposed a strict sense of serial time upon the subject's responses, often demarcating queries with periods from pre-1945, to 1946-1948, 1949-1953, and 1953-1956. All the questions within the questionnaire were conducted in a timely manner as relates to the events under examination, reducing anxiety regarding any distortion of human recollection amongst the interviewees.

The interviews were all conducted in Hungarian or English, and recorded in English by short-hand and written out in full after the interview process was concluded. As a result,

[31] Burke, *New Perspectives on Historical Writing*: 116.

language analysis for keyword use is not an option for this study. Although all the interviewers were well-versed in both Hungarian and recent Hungarian events (in fact many interviewers were recent refugees themselves), there is little possibility to draw any conclusions based on word association, and in fact many terms in English such as 'hooliganism' were unfamiliar to the interviewees and required explanation.

An added element of critical assessment, labelled "Ratings" in Section X of the interviews, required the interviewer to provide "a paragraph giving his informal, impressionistic portrait of the respondent—his personality, goals, motivation, 'what makes him tick'".[32] The questions herein are based on a scale rating and include such inquiries as frankness, cooperativeness, and compliance of the subject. The advantage in this section is two-fold, providing insight into how the subject performed during the interview (placating or lying to the interviewer) and provides a glimpse into the character of the interviewers administering the interviews. Since these interviews are my not own works it is crucial to know as much about the author as possible before taking advantage of the rich data available within the interview collection.

[32] Columbia University Research Project on Hungary. *Donald and Vera Blinken Collection – Hungarian refugee Interviews from 1957-1958.* OSA Archivum <http://www.osa.ceu.hu/digitalarchive/blinken/index.html> (accessed on Nov 12, 2006), Interview Guide A, Section X: 3.

1. Economic Policy and Agricultural Development in Hungary

1.1 The Prewar Situation

This first chapter serves as a general overview and introduction to the prevailing pre-Soviet and Soviet political, economic, and socio-political realities. Although this study presumes a certain amount of background information on the part of the reader pertaining to Hungary's history, it is nonetheless necessary to deal with these topics in order to establish the atmosphere within the country both prior to and inclusive of the Stalinist period. While I do not wish to diminish the wide spread economic and political disparity in either of the above-mentioned periods, it is outside the scope of this essay to perform a more in-depth analysis of these categories.

Social classes in prewar Hungary can be divided into four categories: the aristocracy, intelligentsia, the worker, and the peasant. Within the peasant class itself there existed three notable economic stratum: the large landholder, who usually employed day labourers; the middle peasant, who typically managed to achieve some degree of self-sufficiency through cultivation and marketing of their crops; and the landless peasant, who did not own land and had a higher degree of contact with industrial work than the former two classes.[33]

Land, labour, and lordship typified the economic parameters of the Hungarian peasants' world prior to 1945. The ownership of land throughout most of Eastern Europe prior to collectivization was patrimonial and became a means of identifying oneself in the social hierarchy. Most of the landowning families in Hungary were middle-peasants, allowing for a certain degree of independence in some aspect of everyday life but not enough become completely self-sufficient.[34] However, this only accounted for one-third of

[33] SF No. 152.
[34] C. M. Hann, *The Skeleton at the Feast*. (Canterbury: CSAS Monographs, 1995): 34.

the peasantry, while the rest were considered landless.[35] According the anthropologist Katherine Verdery, property played a primary role in every person's life, since it represented "simultaneously a cultural system, an organization of power, and sets of social relations, all coming together in social processes".[36] Amongst the numerous benefits to be derived from owning land, reliance upon none outside of the family labour unit was the ultimate material goal.

Subsistence was not simply about providing for the family. It also carried a degree of social prestige, since those who were able to survive off their land were regarded as in control of their affairs and thus respected. Those peasants forced to leave their lands (or had none at all) to seek employment under the patronage of others were at the lowest levels of the social strata.[37] In addition, it was socially unacceptable for a peasant to purchase staple goods from a merchant, as self-sustenance was considered the most basic function and foremost duty of the peasant. In most cases, the only time a peasant went to a merchant or vendor was when he was in need of specifically urban-made goods such as clothing or regionally specific items, meaning he operated primarily outside the money economy.[38]

The fact of the matter was that despite the elaborate system of social prestige based on land ownership in pre-Socialist Hungary, approximately two-thirds of the peasantry was landless or possessed not nearly enough to support a family.[39] The repercussions of World War I, followed by the Great Depression in the 1930s, severely crippled the agricultural sector in Hungary, creating a land of "three million beggars".[40] In fact, the income records in 1932 indicate that only six percent of all agricultural producers generated a profit of more

[35] Lampland, "Pigs, Party Secretaries, and Private Lives in Hungary" : 468
[36] Katherine Verdery, *The Vanishing Hectare: Property and Value in Postsocialist Transylvania*. (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2003): 48.
[37] Lampland, "Pigs, Party Secretaries, and Private Lives in Hungary" : 468
[38] Coulter, "The Hungarian Peasantry: 1948-1956" : 547.
[39] Lampland, "Pigs, Party Secretaries, and Private Lives in Hungary" : 468.
[40] Andrew C. János , *The Politics of Backwardness in Hungary, 1825-1945*. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1982): 240.

than five percent, with even great landowners having to focus large amounts of their resources simply to subsist.[41]

A number of events in the 20th century had introduced the peasantry to the world outside their village holdings and community life cycle. The political activities of the peasant in the pre-Soviet period typically did not extend beyond his lord's manor. The manorial lord dealt with the peasantry's concerns at a local level, meaning only in the rarest of situations would a peasant interact with such political bodies as the Hungarian parliament. As indicated by Andrew C. János, parliament was for the intellectuals and beyond the reach of the peasantry, who "would be too awkward in the company of gentlemen".[42]

However, this reality changed after the First World War, as the generation who had marched off to fight in the Great War was now coming back with a much broader understanding of the world beyond the lands they toiled. In addition, literacy rates began to climb as well, allowing rural communities to access newspapers and become acquainted with the world at large, reaching even the poorest of peasants through word of mouth.[43] Although the pre-Soviet Hungarian peasants' world was significantly broader than it had been before World War I, the difficulties inherited from defeat in the Second World War would again expose the peasant to an alternate set of experiences.

The political structure of interwar Hungary has been defined by a number of historians as authoritarian in practice while being democratic on paper. As Gábor Gyáni indicates, "it was not the alliance of popular forces, the workers and the peasants, that determined political life, but rather a political party that represented the interests of the

[41] János , *The Politics of Backwardness in Hungary, 1825-1945*: 245.
[42] János , *The Politics of Backwardness in Hungary, 1825-1945*: 241/2.
[43] János , *The Politics of Backwardness in Hungary, 1825-1945*: 241.

landowners and capitalists, capable of integrating the peasantry".[44] Compared to other democratically structured nations, on average enfranchising 45-65 percent of the population with voting rights, Hungary's requirements of education and landholding allowed for only 20-40 percent of its 9 million inhabitants to participate in the electoral process.[45] In the cities and other large urban centres, the process of voting was privileged with a secret ballot. In the countryside this privilege was not provided but instead open voting was required, leading to overt political pressures in the political leanings of many peasants.[46]

The most notable parties before 1939 were the Independent Smallholders' Party and the Social Democratic Party. The former was favoured by the peasantry, especially among the middle and large landholders, while the latter gained prominence amongst the proletariat, including the landless peasants. This period in politics was typified by ideological extremes amongst most of the participating parties, with the ISP offering the only real option for a democratic system of government.[47]

The most prominent parties in the post-1945 period were the Independent Smallholders' Party, Hungarian Communist Party, Socialist Democratic Party, and the recently reformed National Peasants' Party (NPP). The latter party was initially created in 1939 but until 1944 it did not play a major role in the political apparatus compared to the ISP or SDP. The NPP was initially a pro-peasant party, aimed at providing a voice for the poor peasants and small landholders.[48] However, in 1944 the NPP realigned its platform towards the agricultural worker. It leaders Ferenc Erdei and Imre Kovács had been "village

[44] Gábor Gyáni and others, *Social History of Hungary from the Reform Era to the End of the Twentieth Century*. (New York: Columbia University Press, 2004): 494-5.
[45] Gyáni and others, *Social History of Hungary from the Reform Era to the End of the Twentieth Century*: 495.
[46] Gyáni and others, *Social History of Hungary from the Reform Era to the End of the Twentieth Century*: 495.
[47] Peter Kenez, *Hungary from the Nazis to the Soviets.* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006): 88.
[48] Kenez, *Hungary from the Nazis to the Soviets*: 86.

explorers" in the interwar period and desired to dismantle feudal Hungary in favour of a pro-nationalist state. Although they attempted to garner their support from the rural areas, Erdei was known to be aligned with the HCP, a party that was seen in the villages as extremely pro-worker and negligent of the peasantry. The ISP still retained a high level of popularity in the postwar period as it had in the interwar era.[49] The primary task of the political parties in Hungary would be in reconstructing a crippled state.

1.2 Aftermath of War

Postwar demographics for Hungary list just over 9 million inhabitants, with two-thirds living in the countryside, and half of the entire population engaged in agricultural production.[50] Despite huge losses to the agricultural sector in the Second World War, by 1949 great strides had been achieved in revitalizing the livestock numbers, partly reflected in the fact that 40 percent of the national income was agricultural-based.[51] Additionally, the postwar period saw an increased level of participation in politics amongst the rural communities.

The massive losses incurred by Hungary during World War II, both in lives and infrastructure destroyed, left the entire country in a state of much-needed repair. The subsequent reparations and Potsdam Conference secured Russia's hegemony over Hungary in the postwar era, holding not only the duty of supervising its reconstruction through the Allied Control Commission but also of extracting war losses in whatever fashion Russia desired. The removal of industrial equipment and revenues left an already crippled Hungarian population unable to reorganize itself without the aid of Moscow. For the peasantry, who had employed a low-tech means of working their lands, 1945 primarily

[49] Kenez, *Hungary from the Nazis to the Soviets*: 88.
[50] Gyáni and others, *Social History of Hungary from the Reform Era to the End of the Twentieth Century*: 523
[51] Kenez, *Hungary from the Nazis to the Soviets*: 96.

signalled a change in land ownership, from the large estates to individual holdings, enfranchising a large majority of the previously landless peasantry. Imre Nagy's short term as Minister of Agriculture promulgated a massive land reform act, greatly equalizing the ownership of property for those with none, yet not providing enough arable land for most to become self-sufficient.

The purpose of the land reform was three-fold. First, it was meant to satiate the population's desire to become private landowners. Secondly, it weakened the well-entrenched Catholic Church, previously the largest landowner in Hungary who relied financially on rental income from its lands. Approximately 35 percent of all land in Hungary changed hands in 1945, with anyone owning less than 10 holds (or 14.2 acres) being entitled to a land grant.[52] Last, the land reform was meant to bolster support for the Hungarian Communist Party so they could make a good showing in the elections. In regards to building socialism, the reforms were seen as crucial to "facilitate plans for rapid industrial growth by (1) seizing a major means of production and transferring its surplus directly into industrialization; (2) control the rural population, the food supply, and thereby the price of food; and (3) creating a proletariat for industrial work".[53]

Under the new electoral system, all Hungarian citizens over the age of 20 were allowed to vote. The HCP, relying on a majority of the votes in Budapest and the surrounding area, did not push their campaign into the countryside, instead hoping the land reform would stir up votes from the villages. However, the 1945 elections illustrated well the ineffectual strategy of the land reforms for the Communists, in which the HCP and the

[52] Bell, *Peasants in Socialist Transition: life in a collectivized Hungarian village*: 104.
[53] Verdery, *The Vanishing Hectare: Property and Value in Postsocialist Transylvania*: 41.

NPP cumulatively received only 24 percent of the votes, compared to 57 percent accumulated by the Independent Smallholders' Party.[54]

Despite Moscow's initial intention to hold out on rapid Sovietization in Hungary, events throughout 1945-1948 would alter Stalin's position on the matter. Hungary's political transformations are divided by historian Hugh Seton-Watson into three stages. The first period from December 1944 – May 1947 was that of the Genuine Coalition.[55] In this stage, the Muscovites (Moscow-trained Hungarian Communists, such as Mátyás Rákosi) suppressed the desires of the native Hungarian Communists (such as László Rajk) from immediately establishing a dictatorship of the proletariat, instead opting for the formation of a coalition government. The second stage was that of the Bogus Coalition, lasting from May 1947 – December 1948, and was characterized by having key government administrations under Communist control, ensuring that nothing in Hungary happened without the HCP's support. The last stage was that of the Monolithic Communist rule, occurring from December 1948 - November 1956.[56] This last stage signified an end to the Communization policy that Stalin had intended for Hungary, and marked the beginning not only of a one-party political system but also of rapid Sovietization under Muscovite leadership.

The major issues in Hungary's 1945 elections were primarily concerned with religion, industrial modernization, land redistribution to the peasantry, economic growth, and access to education.[57] The inherent ideological conflicts between religion and Communism threatened to be a serious disadvantage to the HCP in the election, but their

[54] U.S. Library of Congress. "Country Studies: Hungary", n.d., <http//:www.countrystudies.com/hungary> (accessed on February 12, 2005) and, Peter Kenez, *Hungary from the Nazis to the Soviets*: 96; it is interesting to note tat as Hungary's first democratically elected government, an impressive 92% of the eligible voting pool participated, making this one of the most representative electoral turn-outs in the 20th century.

[55] Charles Gati, *Hungary and the Soviet bloc.* (North Carolina: Duke University Press, 1986): 90.

[56] Gati, *Hungary and the Soviet bloc*: 84.

[57] Gati, *Hungary and the Soviet bloc*: 83.

agenda for modernizing the urban regions and resurrecting Hungary's battered economy held the strongest chance of success among all the parties. However, the voting population harboured concerns of a Soviet takeover and showed so on the day of elections.

The provisional government that was established in Debrecen on 22 December 1944 had been completely dominated by the Communists, who held 495 seats in the assembly.[58] The elections of 15 November 1945 dramatically reduced the parliamentary presence of the HCP. This election had mobilized the largest turnout in the country's history, typically accredited to the universal suffrage granted under the provisional government.[59] Hungary was then declared a Republic, a decision unopposed by any of the parties, and Zoltán Tildy of the Independent Smallholders' Party was nominated Prime Minister while Ferenc Nagy was appointed Premier.[60] The results of the election did not satisfy the ACC's Marshal Voroshilov, and Nagy and Tildy were denied the right to nominate certain politicians to key ministerial positions. Instead, Voroshilov used his veto power and his influence to appoint Soviet sympathisers to several ministry positions.

Unfortunately for Rákosi, the agricultural reforms initiated by Imre Nagy in 1945 had not generated the popular support anticipated by the HCP. The parcels of land given to the population, a mere seven acres, in almost all cases fell short of providing enough to support a Hungarian family.[61] This meant that most peasants were forced to seek industrial work in the urban centers. The farmers who decided to continue with agriculture either became State employees on collectivized farms or were branded kulaks (rich peasants) and

[58] U.S. Library of Congress. "Country Studies: Hungary"
[59] Kenez, "The Hungarian Communist Party and the Catholic Church, 1945-1948" : 874.
[60] Vaclav Benez and others, *Eastern European Government and Politics.* (New York: Harper & Row, 1966): 144
[61] U.S. Library of Congress. "Country Studies: Hungary".

persecuted by the government for being capitalists.[62] In the Soviet model, private land ownership did not play a role since all modes of production were controlled by the central government.[63]

The phases of collectivization in Hungary were periodized by seven events. The first was the land reforms on 15 March 1945, meant to placate the land hunger of the population. The second period lasted from 1946-1948, whereby the Party encourages private farming over collectivization. Third was the inter-Soviet political debate on Yugoslavia's failure to collectivize at a Party meeting on 27 June 1948, and just under a month later Rákosi announced the HCP's decision to implement collectivization based on Moscow's criticism of Marshall Tito. In the fourth period, from 1948-1949, peasants who received land in 1945 begin to voluntarily form co-operatives to improve their diminishing chances of subsistence, thus affording each other the benefit of more farm equipment and labour. The fifth stage, from 1950-1953 marked the most aggressive phase of collectivization. Rákosi and the State apparatus engaged in a viciously coercive campaign to convince the peasantry to join collective or state farms. The "New Course" of Imre Nagy from 1953-1955, marked by the death of Stalin, was characterized as the sixth period and precipitated the freezing the compulsory deliveries and abrogation of the collectives. The seventh and last period was Rákosi's return as leader of the HCP in 1955-56, marked by a second wave of collectivization. The second wave did not manage to achieve its aims, and many of the collectives formed during this period were disbanded following the events of October 1956.[64] For the majority of landless peasants, as well as those who joined the

[62] U.S. Department of the Army, "Hungary: Resistance Activities and Potentials," January 1956. (Washington, D.C.: Georgetown University, 1956): 2. and Tamas Aczel, *Ten Years After*. (Great Britain: MacGibbon & Kee Ltd., 1966): 4.
[63] Csaba Bekes, *The 1956 Hungarian Revolution: A History in Documents*. (Budapest: Central European University Press, 2002): 5.
[64] Nigel Swain, "From kolkhoz to holding company: a Hungarian agricultural producer co-operative in transition." *Journal of Historical Sociology* 13, no. 2 (June 2000): 145.

collectives and state farms, these events were of great significance. For the smallholder and middle peasant, these phases were not as pronounced. Instead the smallholders' experience throughout the collectivization drive displayed much more of continuity, characterized most prominently by rapidly disintegrating conditions and increased hardships.

The HCP's collectivization campaign was not the first instance of a co-operative model of farming in Hungary. Collectives had existed in Hungary as early as the 1860s, peaking in popularity during the 1930s. The collectives operated as marketing enterprises, centrally directed by the Central National Saving and Loan Association, who provided the funds necessary for purchasing farming equipment on a loan system to assist in agricultural development. However, these collectives were completely voluntary and not part of a state-driven centralization program.[65]

Additionally, compulsory deliveries were not unique to 1949, but had been introduced in the aftermath of the war to stem the tide of starvation in the major urban centres. The Second World War had left little means for the urban population to acquire food, making them wholly dependant upon the rural population for food. As a result, by July 1945, price freezing on food stuffs was introduced to prevent inflation and price gouging, along with compulsory deliveries. Unlike the Soviet model of compulsory deliveries, the peasants were paid for their crops.[66]

The first step towards implementing Soviet-style collectivization in Hungary was discussed in April 1948. The HCP concluded after a brief study of the agricultural and social conditions that "the conditions do not yet exist in Hungary for individual farming to be replaced universally by cooperative farms…the transition…is a slow process which

[65] Marida Hollos and Bela C. Maday, eds., *New Hungarian Peasants: An East Central European Experience with Collectivization*. (New York: Social Science Monographs, 1983): 6.
[66] Bell, *Peasants in Socialist Transition*:: 115.

demands the voluntary decision and patient education of the peasant".[67] However, the food shortages demanded some form of corrective measures. The HCP's answer to this was the institution of compulsory deliveries, and the economic centralization of agriculture.[68]

1.3 Dekulakization

According to historian and political theorist David Mitrany, the concept of collectivization was not in the initial interests of Stalin, who preferred a much more conciliatory approach.[69] The decision to implement radical agrarian economic reforms was based on the realities of food shortages in Russia caused by poor harvests in the 1920s. Historians Edit Fél and Tamás Hofer indicate that the Soviet agricultural reforms of 1927 "marked the end of a process by which land possessed by the community and used in a collective way for 200 years was fragmented into exactly measured and independently used parcels of private property".[70] In Hungary, a similar process would occur in 1948 when Mátyás Rákosi introduced an economic policy both anti-agricultural and devoid of considerations regarding the strengths and capabilities of the country's economic capabilities. According to historian Ivan Berend, the HCP's imposition of agricultural and industrial reforms in such a mechanical and dehumanizing fashion completely debunked any forseeable benefits the Party espoused in the eyes of the peasantry.[71]

The idea of implementing collectivization in the postwar Soviet bloc, and in particular Hungary, was propagated by Stalin himself in 1948, who saw it as a means of increasing agricultural output through large-scale mechanization following World War II,

[67] Sándor Balogh, *The History of Hungary After the Second World War, 1944-1980*. (Gyomaendrod: Kner Printing House, 1986): 107.
[68] Bell, *Peasants in Socialist Transition*: 115.
[69] David Mitrany, *Marx against the Peasant: A Study in Social Dogmatism*. (New York: Crowell-Collier Publishing Company, 1961): 7.
[70] Edit Fél and Tamás Hofer, eds., *Proper Peasants: traditional life in a Hungarian village*. (Chicago: Wenner-Gren Foundation for Anthropological Research, 1969): 52.
[71] Ivan T. Berend, *The Hungarian economic reforms 1953-1988*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990): 31.

effectively creating agro-towns more characteristic of urban than rural centers.[72] The agricultural reforms of 1948-1953 radically differed from the pre-Soviet Hungarian system. The new policy aimed to create a class identity within the peasantry that was akin, if not synonymous with an urbanized, industrial working class. Additionally, the reforms were intended to correct what Soviet leaders had proclaimed as the backwardness of Hungary, restructuring the country into a heavily industrialized and mechanized production center. The implementation of central planning effectively destroyed the plausibility of an open market society, directed state funds away from any spheres not integral to heavy industry (agriculture in particular), and forced innumerable members of the rural population to seek employment opportunities outside their traditional agrarian lifestyles.[73] The pre-existing composition of independent middle peasants and large estate owners was replaced for the first time with what Swain called "small peasant agriculture".[74] The majority of the new peasantry that maintained independence from the collectives increasingly felt pressure to join a collective farm by the HCP. In conjunction with mounting pressure to join a collective was the introduction of an aggressive class warfare campaign against the kulak that was reminiscent of Leninist methods.[75] The individuals who resisted and remained outside the collective farms were summarily labelled as kulaks. Since the creation of this class enemy figured so prominently in the propaganda and conscription tactics of the Hungarian government, it deserves some mention as to its origins and usage in the Hungarian context.

The first usage of the term kulak in Bolshevik rhetoric was by V.I. Lenin. The definition, as determined by Lenin, was to refer to extortionists in the countryside; not

[72] Mitrany, *Marx against the Peasant: A Study in Social Dogmatism*: 8.
[73] Hann, *The Skeleton at the Feast*: 68.
[74] Swain, *Collective Farms which Work?*: 3.
[75] David. A. Kideckel, "The Socialist Transformation of Agriculture in a Romanian Commune, 1945-1962." *American Ethnologist* 9 (May 1982): 323.

necessarily peasants themselves but those who reaped profit from hard labour of the peasantry by trading goods or administrating over communes.[76] However, by 1928, the word kulak acquired a much more transient meaning. Stalin began using it not as a standard by which to determine policy, but continually manipulated the definition to include those within the population he saw as destabilizing or inhibiting the collectivization drive.[77] Its incorporation into the Hungarian agrarian reforms twenty years later would remain just as transient in definition as before.

Following the National Conference of Agricultural Cooperatives (MSZOK) in September 1948, despite conclusions in April of the same year that Hungarian agriculture was not prepared for such a program, the HCP introduced three types of collectives. The categories followed the same division as the Russian model, with the kolkhoz being the largest.[78] It was at this time that the Russian term kulak entered into the Hungarian model. In theory, kulak referred to anyone who owned more than 25 holds of land, employed outside labourers, had a net income of 350 gold crowns or more, or had some other form of income aside from farming.[79] The HCP required only one of these conditions to be met for a peasant to be branded a kulak. According to these requirements, over 70,000 farms were now kulak farms. In actuality, only 30,000 could be considered wealthy peasants, accounting for only 3.3 percent of all agricultural earners.[80] By the end of 1948 roughly 500 cooperative farms were established, primarily populated by the middle and poor peasants who saw the land they had received in 1945 as inadequate to support themselves and meet

[76] Moshe Lewin, *The making of the Soviet system: essays in the social history of interwar Russia*. (New York: The New Press, 1985): 122.
[77] Lewin, *The making of the Soviet system: essays in the social history of interwar Russia*: 128.
[78] Swain, "From kolkhoz to holding company: a Hungarian agricultural producer co-operative in transition" : 145.
[79] Balogh, *The History of Hungary after the Second World War, 1944-1980*: 110.
[80] Balogh, *The History of Hungary after the Second World War, 1944-1980*: 110.

mandatory deliveries.[81] Anyone was allowed to join the cooperatives in the first two years of its implementation, and in many cases the HCP sent out army officers, urban party men, AVH operatives, and the regular Blue Police to convince peasants to join.

The pressure to join the co-operatives gradually increased over the course of 1949, and remaining independent also became a struggle in view of new taxation laws and increased delivery quotas. Often, agricultural products sold to the state according to compulsory delivery laws were done so at a fraction of the market price, and then the state sold it back to the same peasant at an inflated mark-up. However, the penalties for not fulfilling the quotas were "so severe that it was usually preferable to take one's chance on starvation".[82] In order to combat the increasing deficit facing peasants outside the cooperatives, many husbands and children would commute to factories and urban centers where they could make three or four times the amount they received at the farms, sometimes even abandoning the farm altogether for what seemed like a better life in the cities.[83]

A large part of the problem was the HCP's financial commitment (or lack thereof) in agriculture: 15 percent of total state investments went into agriculture in the Three Year Plan, as well as the new Five Year Plan formulated in 1950.[84] This lack of investment resulted in agricultural commodity dropping to 26 percent below the prewar levels.[85]

The year 1950 was a crucial turning point for both the peasantry and the State. With decreasing requisitions from the farms in the face of an increasing need for such provisions (due to rapid industrialization, and combined with rising peasant discontent), the conditions for open confrontation between the peasantry and the Party were present. From the government's side, they accredited their insufficient rural support and inadequate grain

[81] Balogh, *The History of Hungary after the Second World War, 1944*-1980: 108.
[82] Coulter, "The Hungarian Peasantry: 1948-1956" : 458.
[83] Coulter, "The Hungarian Peasantry: 1948-1956" : 548.
[84] Balogh, *The History of Hungary after the Second World War, 1944*-1980: 101.
[85] Balogh, *The History of Hungary after the Second World War, 1944*-1980: 101.

supplies not as a result of poor economic policies but because of saboteurs or an incomplete administration.[86] This typically Stalinist rationale sparked a dekulakization program in the fall of 1950.

The first measure was to increase taxation. Forced deliveries, land taxes, and peace loans (to which all kulaks had to oversubscribe) were increased. Kulaks were disallowed from obtaining government loans, prices for fertilizers drastically exceeded the free market price, and if a peasant owned as little as 10-15 holds, they became targets of any new anti-kulak legislation.[87] The state also levied fines for a number of minor offences: a barking dog, a plough not being in the shed, no concrete floor in the pigsty, a bicycle left at the road, or improperly stacking the manure in the barnyard, all strategies aimed at making life outside the cooperatives difficult at best.[88] Many kulaks also feared deportation to state-run camps such as the one in Hortobágy; organized and run by a state division commonly referred to as the "transfer brigade". Additionally, if a party official desired the home of a farmer, they could easily have the entire family transferred to one of these camps and then move in to the vacant dwelling.[89] By 1952, kulaks were completely denied entrance into the cooperatives, making anyone outside the cooperatives subject to state harassment and persecution.

In response to the aggressive dekulakization policies of the HCP, the peasants halted mandatory deliveries, concealed harvests, and bribed officials.[90] The peasantry also engaged in self-dekulakization. It is estimated that from 1950-1953, roughly 218,000 peasants left their farms and moved to urban centres, not including those who abandoned

[86] Bell, *Peasants in Socialist Transition*: 112.
[87] Coulter, "The Hungarian Peasantry: 1948-1956" : 542.
[88] SF No. 626.
[89] Coulter, "The Hungarian Peasantry: 1948-1956" : 542.
[90] Coulter, "The Hungarian Peasantry: 1948-1956" : 551.

farming and commuted to and from industrial jobs.[91] Between the dekulakization campaign and the sabotage by peasant rebels, the HCP's attempt at social engineering faced a crisis. By the winter of 1951, over 800,000 peasant families were without goods for the winter, leaving 330,000 of them unable to make tax payments to the government.[92]

Despite the obvious failures of the dekulakization campaign, the HCP continued ahead. The program managed to reach beyond the rural districts and into the urban areas. In one such case, the son of Gyula Kalicz was relieved from his position in an urban police force because the authorities found out that Kalicz's family was branded as kulak. This label even denied Kalicz's grandson from receiving an education.[93] Other families were not so fortunate, as many family members who were considered kulaks were taken away by the state police (AVH) and tortured before being deported. This tactic was used to scare peasants into forming collectives but also in removing the farmers who had the required experience to manage and cultivate such an operation.[94]

The subsequent period known as the New Course, under the ministerial leadership of Imre Nagy, greatly relieved the pressure on the peasantry, and reorganized the national economy to allow for higher investment into agriculture while permitting members of the collectives the freedom to disband and return to their own family labour unit.

1.4 From Reform to Revolution

By the time of Nagy's "New Course" in 1953, the average income of independent farmers had sank to 66 percent of that in 1949, while co-operative employees received 67.5 percent of what the independent farmer received.[95] In addition, of the 47,000 wealthy farmers reported in 1949, only 10,000 remained in 1953, most of them only half their

[91] Coulter, "The Hungarian Peasantry: 1948-1956" : 548.
[92] Balogh, *The History of Hungary after the Second World War, 1944-1980*: 111.
[93] Bell, *Peasants in Socialist Transition*: 114.
[94] Coulter, "The Hungarian Peasantry: 1948-1956" : 544.
[95] Balogh, *The History of Hungary after the Second World War, 1944-1980*: 112.

original hold sizes since most farmers were unable to pay their taxes or meet forced deliveries.[96]

Based on declining wages and the inability of collectives to meet their delivery quotas, it became apparent to Nagy that agricultural reforms were necessary to relieve mounting social disparity and aggravation amongst the peasantry.[97] There were also numerous elements of the Five Year Plan that had never seen completion: only half of the 22,000 tractors planned for distribution were ever made, available fertilizers were in decline despite the growing number of members in collective and state farms, and 5 million of the 11 million forints designated for agricultural development actually did materialize.[98]

The next two years of laxity in state interference in the lives of the rural population afforded the chance for many peasants to reorganize their farms, leave the collectives, and improved tenuous relations between rural and urban populations; both lifestyles realized the other had experienced the same conditions of oppression and persecution, creating unity in opinion and resistance.[99] For those peasants who remained in the collectives, the number of tractors and overall national investment into improving farming methods and fertilizers were increased by 100 and 500 percent respectively.[100] Unfortunately for the peasantry, a change in Moscow's attitudes towards Nagy's reform policies limited further development and growth in agriculture, eventually resulting in the prime minister's removal as head of the HCP.

[96] Bell, *Peasants in Socialist Transition*: 116.
[97] SF No. 152: Imre Nagy recognized and publicly acknowledged the lack of funds and disparity of the population in the Soviet's attempt to reach unattainable industrialization goals. In his 1953 speech to parliament, Nagy "gave an excellent analysis of our [Hungarians] economic maladies. He defined the need to reduce heavy industry and need intensification of agricultural production as his goal."
[98] Swain, *Collective Farms which Work?*: 26.
[99] Coulter, "The Hungarian Peasantry: 1948-1956" : 457.
[100] Swain, *Collective Farms which Work?*: 27.

In April 1955, when Rákosi and Gerő returned to the helm of the Communist government, their attempts at reinstituting collectivization and dekulakization failed utterly. From December 1955 – October 1956, the number of cooperatives only rose by 2 percent in comparison to the previous year.[101] In July of 1956, the HCP introduced concessions relieving the peasantry of any arrears in taxes up to a maximum of 50,000 forints. This was introduced when the Soviet government admitted that it was their own policies that were crippling their efforts to revitalize the agricultural sector.[102]

The by-product of the 1956 Revolution was emancipation from mass collectivization (for a few years) and permanent relief from dekulakization on such a violent scale. Following October 23rd, the peasantry established revolutionary councils, destroyed party lists and tax records, but preserved land ownership records.[103] The new Communist government of Imre Nagy made immediate agrarian reforms to placate the needs of the rural areas, abolishing forced deliveries and allowed peasants to divide the land and livestock from abandoned cooperatives.[104] This abandonment of the cooperatives was not simply a phenomenon of the revolution either; from November to March 1957, only 3333 farms remained collectivized, being worked by 158,469 people in all of Hungary.[105] It would not be until the 1960s that the HWP would again attempt agricultural reforms, but never again on such a massive scale or intensity.[106]

[101] Coulter, "The Hungarian Peasantry: 1948-1956" : 457.
[102] Coulter, "The Hungarian Peasantry: 1948-1956" : 457.
[103] Coulter, "The Hungarian Peasantry: 1948-1956" : 553.
[104] Coulter, "The Hungarian Peasantry: 1948-1956" : 552.
[105] Coulter, "The Hungarian Peasantry: 1948-1956" : 552.
[106] Bell, *Peasants in Socialist Transition*: Chapter 6.

2. The New Politics

> There are two social classes under communism: the party aristocracy and the rest of the population.[107]

Politics in prewar Hungary was mainly the domain of the aristocracy. Although the peasantry itself was in the incipient stages of developing a much broader understanding of his environment through increased growing interaction with the market economy and exposure to the urban environment, it still did not play a noticeable role in the government. According to historian Andrew János, "parliament was, at best, a distant place where educated people conducted their own business at the expense of the peasantry".[108]

The extent of political exposure most peasants experienced during their lifetime was between themselves and landowners of large estates, and perhaps a limited number of local trade unions. To a large degree, villages were completely autonomous political and economic units, responsible for tax collections, land purchases, and selecting from the local population a number of men for military service.[109] The administration at the village level was populated by the most prosperous members of the community, who held the positions of mayor, alderman, and magistrate. The only time someone from outside the village was brought in to the local bureaucracy was in the case of the notary, since the position required specialized training. In addition, midwives were sometimes recruited from outside the local population if the community was lacking its own.[110]

The termination of Admiral Miklós Horthy's regency in Hungary on 15 October 1944, and the subsequent Russian liberation of Budapest on 13 February 1945 relieved the nation for the first time from the bonds of authoritarian control. However, the brief

[107] SF No. 238.
[108] János , *The Politics of Backwardness in Hungary, 1825-1945*: 241.
[109] Bell, *Peasants in Socialist Transition*: 88.
[110] Bell, *Peasants in Socialist Transition*: 89.

interlude of a multiparty coalition government (December 1944 - May 1947) had become impotent in view of the large number of key ministries controlled by the Hungarian Communist Party, providing a prelude to the Soviet political takeover of December 1948.[111]

The Communist regime's agenda of mass economic mobilization and social engineering reached far into the countryside, imposing its presence upon the peasantry en masse. As a result, the rural population was forced to accommodate a previously unknown element into their lives: national politics and centralized planning. The subject files examined for this study discuss quite frequently, and quite thoroughly, the interaction of the peasantry with the Communist State. Dialogue on the population's interaction and interpretation of the new politics in Hungary is presented below thematically in three categories: general impressions and representation of communism and of its aims and goals; the structure and nature of the Hungarian Communist Party itself, and; the interaction and relationship between the villagers and their respective local administrative and workers' councils.

The first thematic approach will analyze how the rural population interpreted and interacted both with and within the political landscape, in order to describe how certain policy changes were understood and what reactions, social reinterpretations, and lifestyle adaptations it generated amongst the peasant class. The first area of examination is a broad and ambitious attempt to contextualize a number of abstract interpretations regarding what the peasants understood as the general aims and stereotypes of the Communists in Hungary, as well as the villagers' interpretation of the Party's attitudes.

Secondly, the Communist Party itself is placed in the front and centre, with the intention of the elucidating the peasantry's understanding and bias' towards the personalities

[111] Gati, *Hungary and the Soviet bloc*: 84-90.

comprising the State apparatus, and the Stalinist agenda that binds them in governing an ideologically opposed population.

Finally, there will be a dialogue on the grassroots level of experiences between the Party and the peasants within the community and the workplace from the side of the villagers. Attitudes towards local chairmen, management, and frequent problems regarding efficiency in various workplaces will explicate a number of the frustrations experienced in the everyday life of the village while under pressures to meet the demands of collectivization and industrialization.

2.1 Impressions

The aims and goals of the Communist Party in Hungary were, in the minds of the peasant population, clearly linked to Russia's material needs.[112] Although the particulars of these needs was not clearly indicated by the peasants, their unhappiness in being relegated to the duty of feeding "the bottomless appetite of the Soviet Union" generated bitterness and brought forth old stereotypes of the "oriental horde" and "Mongolian type[s]".[113]

The peasantry's general impression of the Party, when compared to the prewar establishment of estate landholders, differed very little in function. The Communist Party was viewed by the peasantry as the new aristocracy, exercising a similar degree of control in the sphere of politics and being composed of a very small number of individuals with only their personal interests in mind. As noted by Subject No. 54-M, "In old times the count had his lovers and nowadays the communist bigwig has his lovers too".[114] Unlike the old aristocracy, however, the villagers did not feel there was any chance for upward mobility or prosperity without being ideologically devoted to the Party's aims. One subject file

[112] SF No. 54-M, SF No. 238.
[113] SF No. 562, SF No. 445, SF No. F-84; Stereotypes of the Mongolian nature was the result of new Soviet troops arriving from Siberia and Mongolia, yet not all the peasants who employed this vernacular knew its origins.
[114] SF No. 152.

described Communism as functioning like a whirlpool, "you can't get out, you can only get sucked in deeper".[115] For the small landholders and middle peasantry, two groups with material possessions to lose to collectivized farms or to the compulsory delivery quotas, the whirlpool manifested itself in every aspect of their lives.

The peasantry's primary concern before 1948 was to attain a reasonable income, not to interact with politics.[116] In rare cases when the peasant population attempted to engage in politics, notably in the coalition government following World War II, an overwhelming majority supported the political agenda of the Independent Smallholders' Party.[117] As such, the state's forceful intervention in 1948 was unwelcome, as were their representatives. The new aristocracy that entered politics was treated by the rural population at best as distrusted and alien, and at worst, became the target of criticism and in some rare instances, harassment. The peasantry often commented that alongside the new aristocracy were the workers, whose international character and central role in the State's propaganda made them the focus of blame as to why the Communists could exercise such extensive influence in Hungary.[118]

The ranks of the new regime, "composed of former bums and peddlers and so on", can be divided into two groups: the pre-1945 Communists and the recruits of the post war period.[119] The old Communists were typified by their Muscovite past (Mátyás Rákosi, Ernő Gerő, Jozsef Révai, and Mihály Farkas), involvement in the Bela Kun take-over of 1919, or

[115] SF No. 54-M.
[116] SF No. 54-M.
[117] SF No. 3-M; The general election on 15 November 1945 ended in a victory for the Independent Smallholders' Party, who won by an overwhelming 57% of the vote. Among the 31 files examined, the political affiliation indicated: 2 Independent Smallholders' Party, 2 Christian Democrats, 1 Peasants' Party, 1 Social Democrat, 12 listed as none, and the remaining 13 being unknown or not listed. Although these numbers do not support the theory that the majority of the subjects identified themselves with the ISP, their responses to questions regarding land ownership, musings on Hungary's economic organization, and the role of the state in agricultural planning favours the Smallholders' platform.
[118] SF No. 26-M.
[119] SF No. 54-M.

participation in the Spanish Civil War. The new Communists were mainly individuals who had joined the Party in hopes of improving their own personal living conditions or found ideological reasons to join.[120]

Once Rákosi began purging his political adversaries from the State apparatus, many individuals re-evaluated their relation with the Party. Increased propaganda and coercion to follow the Party line became increasingly difficult to bear, and numerous people who were disillusioned with the regime, or had experienced mounting pressure by Party officials to remain with the Communists, aligned themselves with the Party in order to keep their jobs or out of fear of personal harassment.[121] The only individuals to join the Party after 1949, according to the Subject Files, were the uprooted people of the village.[122] In reality, the individuals that joined also included key figures within communities as well as peasant farmers who succumbed to Party pressures of high taxation and delivery quotas.

The social stigma associated with joining the Party included being two-faced and willing to denounce ones own friends. "Under communism the person most liable to get ahead is one who is capable of changing his political beliefs and convictions as the situation requires. In other words, he must be a turn-coat. He must be willing to kill [his] own mother should the Party ask".[123] Additionally, due to the association of work with physical labour, the peasantry viewed bureaucrats as lazy, underworked, overpaid, and chronic alcoholics.[124] In short, talent was the least important feature of the supervisors and nomenklatura, trumped by an individual's ability to tow the Party line and execute orders.

[120] Gati, *Hungary and the Soviet bloc*: 82; Hungarian Communist Party membership indices in December 1944 listed a support base of 2,500, later reached an impressive 864,000 in December 1947. The primary cause of this increase was accounted for by the HCP's political manoeuvrings and strong support amongst parties such as the Social Democrats.
[121] SF No. 16-M.
[122] SF No. 426.
[123] SF No. 26-M.
[124] SF No. 21-M.

The lack of human consideration by the State apparatus went beyond the boundaries of miscalculation or oversight on the part of economic policymakers. The exposure to an inefficient and uncaring apparatus was even felt by members of the Air Force. Subject No. 453, a 25-year-old 2nd lieutenant in the Hungarian Air Force, a career that was populated by numerous poor peasants and poor working class, discussed an episode during a flight-training mission where the control tower chastised him for flying at too low an altitude. The air controller would say "don't you know that you could have ruined the plane?".[125] In the communist state, there was a higher value placed on the equipment than on human life.

Another individual, apprenticed during the interwar period as a locksmith, complained in detail about the perversions of the concept of proletariat. "Thirty-four years and the communists called me a capitalist and exploiter. You know what apprenticeship meant in old Hungary? We had to work from six in the morning till eight-nine at night. I had to work in the shop and in the house of the master. I had to watch his kids. If anybody has a proletariat origin – I have it and I was not good enough for the communists".[126] The State's superficial exaltation of the proletariat disillusioned the very class it attempted to promote as the spearhead of the socialist movement. It was obvious for much of the peasantry who attempted to support the Party line that the concept of proletariat was entrenched deeper in political malleability than social origin.

[125] SF No. 453.
[126] SF No. 525.

2.2 Party Apparatus and Ideology

> Elements alien to the mass of the villagers were appointed to these administrative positions to minimize collusion between the people and the representatives of the government.[127]

The Party apparatus, or as a number of Subjects described it the "top 10,000", lived apart from the population and remained enigmatic and elusive characters as far as the peasantry was concerned. Based on the experiences of the rural communities "the top leaders of the HCP are either diabolic fanatics, ambitious people with no moral inhibitions, and the majority are communists by conviction".[128] Rákosi's biography, a widely distributed piece of literature during the early 1950s, provided no insight into Hungary's leader, leaving most of the population to rely upon foreign broadcasts to provide them with information.[129] The lack of acquaintance between the top-level officials and the peasantry likely contributed with the population's feeling of disconnect with the State and its representatives.

The other prominent personalities of the Stalinist period, such as László Rajk, János Kádár, and Ernő Gerő, were often described as "bastards and dirty bums".[130] The only Communist perceived in amicable terms was Imre Nagy, because of the reforms promulgated by the "new course" in 1953.[131] Lower level communists are occasionally described with the same level of negativity as the top 10,000, but with a hint of sympathy. This attitude was more common in areas of prosperity, such as the farms around Budapest or in the western plains. The reason attitudes typically reserved for the top-level communists trickled down to the local level was because of such instances where, say, a

[127] Coulter, "The Hungarian Peasantry: 1948-1956" : 543.
[128] SF No. 26-M.
[129] SF No. 21-M.
[130] SF No. 21-M; The term "dirty bums" appears to be in common usage amongst the Hungarian peasantry at this period in the nation's history. Among the 31 interviews examined, it appears in at least six subject files in relation to questions on the Communist Party's membership.
[131] SF No. 21-M.

Party official would find a house they fancied in the countryside and have the current occupants deported to a work camp and then move in. Similar instances included small groups of Party members forming collective farms out of a few acres and with no animals. In order appropriate necessary items, and to coerce the local peasants to join the new collective, the officials would label certain peasants as kulaks and have them deported by the State police, indirectly threatening the remaining population with similar treatment.[132]

The Party's ideology surrounding the central role of the proletariat and the road to socialism as the ultimate path to prosperity were considered hypocritical and elitist, with the majority of the village viewing the "[communist] system with passivity but at the same time with proud contempt". [133] As far as the peasants were concerned, the only ones to benefit from the reforms were the demagogical political leaders who "lived far removed from the masses, somewhere high above on the Communist Olympus".[134] While moral depravity was well-defined by the peasantry as one of the key features of the regime, it was not considered a new development in the actions of the ruling body. In many ways, the peasants would draw comparisons between the vices of the old counts and the new communists, comparing them to illustrate how little had really changed despite the Party's high praise surrounding the virtues and benefits of building socialism in Hungary.[135]

The level of exposure and intensity of the Party's policies were not equally felt throughout the entire country. Also, all individuals were not unanimously contemptuous of individual Communists they were personally familiar. The measure of the peasantry's experience varied, often based on the proximity of villages to highly populated urban centres. For example, the one of the local priests in the southern village of Baja commented

[132] SF No. 16-M.
[133] SF No. 302.
[134] SF No. 413.
[135] SF No. 525.

that "instructions sent from Pécs lost their force five kilometres away, just like a cup of water in the desert sand".[136]

In addition, age played a substantial role in whether the peasant condemned Communists as a whole or provided exceptions based on familiarity with certain Party member. The older portion of the population, typically those over the age of 30 provided a less critical opinion of the Communists indicating that many of them supported the Party out of fear, coercion, or to sustain their family. When asked about friends who had become communists and the status of those friendships, the younger Subjects disavowed all ties to such people, while the older Subjects took an apologist approach in explaining the circumstances for retaining relations with these individuals.[137]

2.3 Village Politics

Another major source of discontent for villagers was the village council chairman, or director. Typically, these individuals were brought in by the Party from outside the village in an effort to prevent any familial ties from interfering with the execution of the State's orders. All bureaucrats were viewed first and foremost as spies of the Communist Party, creating a very tangible barrier to interaction.[138] In addition, many of the new chairs were young (around 30 years old) and inexperienced in their positions; being able bureaucrats perhaps, but not usually technically trained for their particular field of supervision.[139] As was mentioned before, the peasantry's concept of work was traditionally embedded in the act of physical labour, since the chair's duties required a substantial amount of shuffling

[136] SF No. 72-M.
[137] SF No. 54-M; The peasant apologists often described extreme instances of hardship or coercion that left their neighbours with little choice but to register with the Party. Alternatively, some of the subjects, both young and old indicated that they maintained ties to friends who became Party members because they could suppress the political differences or found it useful to have a Party official in case problems should arise.
[138] SF No. 21-M.
[139] SF No. F-84.

paperwork and issuing orders to individuals in the village, their labours were not regarded as real work.

The second most disliked individual in the village was the "norm-man". His work was described by Subject No. 152 as "confidential work, very unpopular…he received an order, and carried that order out, disregarding every technical or human consideration".[140] The norm-man was the mouth of the Party, not an expert in the technical aspects of industrial or agricultural production. In rural areas where the Party's influence was strong, the deterioration of the farm, and its inability to fill compulsory quotas was often blamed on the incompetence and laziness of the norm-man or chair. In a moment of reflection by Subject No. 605, he indicated that the bailiff of the old count had not been nearly as vicious as the Communist Party's representatives.[141]

However, the village chairs and managers were not impervious to corruption at the expense of the State. In some cases, the peasants could present bribes in lieu of meeting delivery quotas. Additionally, those employed in factories, including the managers, were not ill disposed to requisitioning tools or goods from the workplace. The managers sometimes took this one-step further and submitted financial reports that allowed them to pocket money at the expense of the State.[142] This occurred with an increased frequency depending on the villages distance from the larger cities, and in some smaller and more remote villages, the relationship between the Party's local representatives and the villagers even showed signs of cooperation in assuring the security and well-being of the community.

Two elements that could foster amicable relations between the Party and the people were the competency of the managers in their respective fields and the overall prosperity of

[140] SF No. 152.
[141] SF No. 605.
[142] SF No. 16-M.

the collective itself.[143] In villages where the factory manager or agricultural director was affluent in his trade there tended to be both a higher degree of productivity as well as a greater amount of respect between both parties. In the cases examined, relational improvement was based on the managers ability to not only understand technical aspects of his field, but also because he exercised a certain amount of laxity and willingness to change how operations were executed so to take into account the human condition.[144] The same was true in areas of extremely fertile land or a highly efficient labour force, such as at the collective of Noble Grape. This particular case differs from the Subject Files used in this study in that the population at Noble Grape was not largely composed of smallholders or middle peasants. The Noble Grape collective was primarily populated by poor peasants who were "willing to be directed" unlike the small landholders and middle peasants who illustrated a much greater attachment to their traditional methods of self-governance at the local level.[145]

In the case of one sparsely populated collective farm, located outside Vas and primarily composed of middle peasants, the local chair received praise for both being knowledgeable in agriculture and for defending the community from unreasonably high delivery quotas and production norms. The chair appealed to his Party supervisor to keep the requirements to a minimum because the majority of the villagers claimed to have relatives in America and increased pressure to produce could result in their out-migration to the West.[146] Although further details of the chair's discussion with the Party are not discussed, it is known that the appeal was successful and the village was able to enjoy a marginal improvement in the quality of life than other centres in Hungary. However, it

[143] SF No. 461.
[144] SF No. 525.
[145] Swain, "From kolkhoz to holding company: a Hungarian agricultural producer co-operative in transition" : 147.
[146] SF No. 461.

would be extremely misleading to overemphasize the positive aspects, especially in view of the prominence of numerous explicit concerns dominating the CURPH interview sample.

Anywhere the Party manifested itself, the villagers took heed. It was difficult not to be mindful of the State's presence since every decision or action that was not prescribed to the villagers by the local chair had to go before the council. This resulted in long delays in the village council, and then the State bureaucracy.[147] The procedural setbacks in accomplishing even the most menial tasks, such as ordering an additional thresher machine from the tractor compound, became an arduous task in itself. The effect of the thick bureaucratic nature of Communism reduced productivity and further disillusioned the villagers from the State.

The disillusionment of the peasantry was reinforced daily through the Party's seemingly constant monitoring.[148] Whether it was at the local tavern or the workplace, the villagers were conscious of "Communist ears" that eagerly awaited an opportunity to antagonize or report individuals for clandestine activities.[149] Regular Party meetings, designed to infuse the villagers with State propaganda, actually provided villagers a medium by which to unify and reaffirm their opposition to the Communists. Although the meetings were not openly anti-communist, veiled antipathy was ubiquitous and villagers often employed seemingly innocent tactics to disrupt the speeches of Party representative's, such as those discussed in the first chapter. A sense of apathy and melancholy bonded the villagers together in both their place of work and their family. However, for individuals who left their rural residences, experiences with Party representatives adopted new forms, and integration into the working class culture created a new Hungarian peasant.

[147] SF No. 525.
[148] SF No. 16-M.
[149] SF No. 461, SF No. F-84.

Chapter Conclusions

The peasantry's understanding of politics was dictated by their everyday experience in the workplace and propaganda received during official meetings and recreational events. The degree of influence the Communist Party could exercise on the rural populations was based on three factors: the pre-Soviet economic composition of the population, their proximity to large urban centres, and the competency of the village administrators. The extent of collectivization, as well as adherence to orders issued by the central bureaucracy centrifugally weakened, becoming marginal in the face of geographical barriers.

Age also played a role in moulding individual perceptions of politics and political actors. The subjects over 40 rationalized their friends' decisions, and the lower level administrators, to remain or join the Communists by relating the difficulties of remaining outside the Party. They also interpreted the current regime as being quite comparable to the aristocratic rulers in the prewar period, suggesting that although the State goes by a new name the character is the same. The younger people, impressed upon by the Stalinist reforms at a much younger age than their predecessors, are much less-forgiving and often rescind lifelong familial and non-familial bonds to individuals who join the ranks of the Communists.

For the rural communities, replacing the large estates and counts with the Communists resulted in homogenizing the political experience, as well as unifying the community's opposition to the ruling body. From an administrative point of view, little had really changed for the peasants. Politics primarily persisted at the local level as they had before. What had changed was the nature of the relationship. Whereas in the pre-Soviet era there had been a level of control and cooperation between the village councils and other magistrates, almost all reciprocity between the two parties ceased. No longer did the council members, who previously represented the wealthiest members of the community,

hire day labourers or provide a source of goods and labour exchange. The new village political hierarchy functioned in a detached and mechanical way, inconsiderate of most concerns outside of meeting the norms and fulfilling demands handed down from higher authorities.

Of particular interest is the previously-mentioned case of the Noble Grape collective discussed by Swain, as it lends support to the need for a more in-depth analysis from the bottom up of various peasant societies. To be more specific, while Swain's anthropological study of small rural communities in Hungary provides evidence of a unique instance of prosperity within Hungary, and the experiences of those who are included in his study most definitely do not represent the middle strata of Hungary's peasant society. In this view, these two studies complement each other, and provide for a larger understanding of the diversity of the collectivization experience.

More broadly, the first major experience of the peasantry with state-level politics permitted observation but not interaction. Since the public face of the Communist Party concerned itself with economic aims and not the existing social order, it strongly neglected the overwhelmingly agrarian population in favour of an industrial caste, treating rural areas as places of labour surplus instead of viable support for the creation of a new society and a 'new man'.

3. Transforming the Self

> If they call me a peasant, I don't mind, but if they apply this term to my son, I will kill them.[150]

The social impact of the First Five Year Plan in Hungary reached deep into the countryside, causing an upheaval in pre-existing social orders such as reciprocal relationships, family bonds, and the ways and means of subsistence. Traditional models of social stratification were challenged as rural areas experienced unprecedented rates of emigration to the urban centres, sending agricultural production to an historic low. A previously mentioned, just over a quarter million skilled farmers abandoned agriculture in the four years of aggressive collectivization.[151] The reorganization of the prewar market economy to a command economy was flanked by the mechanization of agriculture into aggregate cooperative communities and an ideological campaign aimed at engineering a 'new man'. The results were far from what the State aimed to achieve. Although there was a significant reassessment of the Stalinist model in Hungary in 1956, the preceding eight years irrevocably altered traditional means of subsistence and worldly perspectives the peasantry once held.

The focus of this chapter will be fourfold. First, the general atmosphere before and during Stalinization, in regards to social norms and the 'new man' policy, will be discussed for contextualization purposes. Secondly, the creation of the hybridized peasant-worker, including its particular characteristics and acclimation into the working class environment, is addressed in order to encapsulate the features of the old peasantry that were challenged by new economic policies. Thirdly, the transformation of the meanings of "work ethics" and "the family unit" during the collectivization campaign will be analyzed from the perspective

[150] Hollos and Maday, eds, *New Hungarian Peasants: An East Central European Experience with Collectivization*: 19.
[151] Bell, *Peasants in Socialist Transition*: 117.

of the smallholder and middle peasant. Lastly, employed strategies for supplementing insufficient incomes and general lack of goods, and the importance of a second economy in curing these ailments, will afford examples of methods by which the rural population attempted to compensate for financial and material maladies.

3.1 Social Stratification and Creation of the 'New Man'

> The regimes ideal, the 'new man', this mythical being, is a creature without religion, and without family ties. He is a man who is constantly at the disposal of the regime and who follows the orders of the state in every way. The state can pull him on a string and direct his life. He must adore the regime in spite of the fact that it is actually bad and does not provide him a good living; he is supposed to consider all forms of government bad and think of the communist state as the only good form of government. He should be convinced, that although today he does not live the way he would like to, his children will enjoy the fruits of his labors and no matter how ridiculous the slogan sounds, he must believe that 'the future belongs to the youth'. He must always test the efficacy of the regime by the promises of the future.[152]

The imposition of collectivization under the auspice of a Soviet-style command economy introduced a number of socio-economic challenges into the lives of the rural population. The prewar peasant no longer found subsistence attainable within the State's First Five Year Plan. Any ability the peasant had to achieve even a marginal degree of self-sufficiency for him and his family (while remaining outside the Party) meant approaching various types of work, be it agricultural or industrial, with a deviant attitude. The need to achieve a basic level of subsistence forced a significant portion of Hungary's rural population to interact directly with industry and the urban population at large. As a result of this class interaction a new type of labourer emerged, often self-described within the interviews as the peasant-worker; neither wholly isolated from the lands he had tilled yet not

[152] SF No. 226.

considered a worker in the sense of a skilled tradesman.[153] Integration into the industrial labour force was often an attempt to appropriate a second income to ease financial burdens associated with low agricultural gains, an experience that altered the peasant's view of his own work ethics, his disposition to the working class, and means of achieving a basic level of subsistence.[154]

By 1948, it was apparent that the land reform of 1945 did not sufficiently placate the needs of the peasantry. The landless peasants, who once relied on seasonal and day labour employment, found that the four or five acres he received from the government were grossly inadequate, and once again moved into the industrial sector to compensate for poor gains in the fields.[155] For the middle peasant and small landholders, their introduction into the industrial sector occurred predominantly in 1949, when the HCP introduced compulsory delivery quotas, taxation based on land holdings, and mandatory subscription to government loans and insurance policies. The high demand of the new economic plan was the first time the landholders were faced with an inability to provide for themselves due to external factors: "the independent peasants were burdened with taxes. The AVH and the TszCa delegations constantly pressed them to enter the cooperatives. Those who were members of the cooperatives did not earn enough money to live by. They were forced to go and work someplace else during the winter".[156] The only recourse available to the peasant was to join

[153] SF No. 72-m, Kata Jávor, "Continuity and change in the Social Value Systems of a Northern Hungarian Village" in Hollos and Maday, eds., *New Hungarian Peasants: An East Central European Experience with Collectivization*: 275.
[154] Kideckel, "The Socialist Transformation of Agriculture in a Romanian Commune, 1945-1962" : 335; David Kideckel's work on socialist transformation in Transylvania provides an insightful description of the dynamic changes incurred through the imposition of a Soviet model. I am indebted to this work for bringing to my attention examples of adaptation and transformation that emerged from the socialist experience.
[155] SF No. 426, Jávor in Hollos and Maday, eds., *New Hungarian Peasants: An East Central European Experience with Collectivization*: 275.
[156] SF No. 152.

a state farm, form a cooperative farm, or seek employment as an unskilled labourer outside the agricultural sector.[157]

Prior to the introduction of Soviet-style collectivization, the attitude of the peasants towards the industrial workers was a combination of distrust and disdain. In the view of a number of peasants, the workers were part of the reason the Communist Party had managed to seize power after World War II.[158] Since the majority of the Party rhetoric expounded the on-going class conflict of the proletariat against bourgeois capitalists and promised great gains to the workers who pledged their loyalty to the Communists, the industrial worker became the interim enemy of the peasantry alongside the Communists themselves. In the countryside, this reality materialized in a number of ways. Workers who lived in the countryside and also owned land maintained a higher quality of life than many of the peasants themselves. The industrial workers' ability to achieve both a reasonable level of financial and material success despite shorter work days created resentment in the rural communities that they resided.[159]

Interaction between agriculture and industry had first emerged during the interwar period, alongside the expansion of the capitalist market. By the postwar period, there was a definite synergy evolving at the upper levels. Farms began to produce crops other than cereals and industry aligned itself with producing goods that relied on agricultural produce for raw materials.[160] Although a large portion of the wealthy and middle peasants had yet to involve themselves directly with the industrial workers, the differences between peasant and worker were not as stark as the former had previously imagined. Just as agricultural

[157] Coulter's article "The Hungarian Peasantry: 1948-1956", although being nearly 50 years old, still provides an accurate account of the numerous tactics employed by the Communists in pauperizing the peasants outside the collective farms in an attempt to coerce them to join.
[158] SF No. 235.
[159] SF No. 16-m.
[160] SF No. 152.

production and industrial goods had found common economic interests, so too would the rural population find common ground with the working class.

3.2 Class Integration: Birth of the Peasant-Worker

Work was not simply a means of establishing a source of income in prewar Hungary; it was a means of establishing oneself socially within the community. The prestige accompanied with work was of such importance to the rural community that individuals who sought employment on another persons land, or left the community for industrial work in urban centers, were seen as socially inferior.[161] However, the shift in importance from "possessing land to possessing labour" introduced by the growing capitalist market economy in Hungary after the turn of the century challenged the traditional notions of social prestige tied to land ownership.[162] The developing trend away from traditional forms of labour is quite apparent in the interwar period; a survey of school children revealed that 87 percent of the respondents indicated that they wanted to work outside of agriculture as unskilled labourers.[163]

It is important to note that the ideological differences between the peasantry and the industrial workers was not as distinguished as in other Western European countries such as France or Germany.[164] The latter countries, having industrialized at an earlier stage than Hungary, had distinct ideological and cultural differences between the peasants and the workers. The late development of industrialization in Hungary, combined with the predominantly peasant origin working class meant that the strong stigmas attached to labour

[161] Lampland, *The object of labor: commodification in socialist Hungary*: 468.
[162] Lampland. *The object of labor: commodification in socialist Hungary*: 469.
[163] János , *The Politics of Backwardness in Hungary, 1825-1945*: 241.
[164] SF No. 152.

outside of the farm was not as rigid or developed as in other countries and allowed for an easier amalgamation.[165]

The peasant-worker was not a combination of the two classes, as anthropologist Mihály Sarkany notes, but signalled the development of a dual identity. [166] Peasants working in industry did not abandon their personal plots, but often returned home after their shift work in the factories to tend to the duties of the farm.[167] In some extreme cases, where the peasant would have to live outside of the farm due to the great distance between the village and their secondary employment, the duties would fall to the spouse or other members of the household.[168] Although such distance between family members often had a detrimental effect on the family unit, it provided for a disintegration of the stereotypes between the two classes.

Another feature of work that changed for the peasantry was the adoption of shift labour, often lasting 8-12 hours a day, and often included a commute between 30 minutes to two hours. This was a strong break with the previous work day routine, where peasants would work the entire day and frequently take small breaks.[169] This resulted in a shift to evening leisure time, part of which was often consumed by the commute back home or Party meetings. Regardless of the particular work schedule of the peasant, the majority of the subjects indicated that once harvest was over they would immediately head into the unskilled labour market for the fall and winter to compensate for the burdens of compulsory deliveries.

[165] SF No. 152.
[166] Mihály Sarkany, "Economic Changes in a Northern Hungarian Village" in Hollos and Maday, eds., *New Hungarian Peasants: An East Central European Experience with Collectivization*: 53, SF No. 72-M.
[167] Sarkany in Hollos and Maday, eds., *New Hungarian Peasants: An East Central European Experience with Collectivization*: 53.
[168] SF No. 461.
[169] Jávor in Hollos and Maday, eds., *New Hungarian Peasants: An East Central European Experience with Collectivization*: 230.

Certain previously assumed truths within the peasantry about the intellectual superiority of the workers lessened during the collectivization experience, as did tensions that developed over the role of the workers in supporting the proletariat movement spurned on by the Communists.[170] According to Subject No. 72-M, who was forced to join the industrial labour force as an unskilled labourer in 1949, during his time in the workplace environment "[he] realized that although the industrial workers may be slightly international in their political contacts they are loyal and reliable Hungarians".[171]

Additional developments, such as the mechanization of agriculture, became integrated with the rural communities, and resulted in a narrowing of the gap in material differences between the village and the urban environment. Although a majority of the peasants disliked the State's attempts to mechanize agriculture, they nonetheless became accustomed to interacting with equipment and amenities typically seen in the urban environment, further blurring the division between the classes.[172] Other changes, such as the abandonment of the traditional dress of the peasantry, was not necessarily a product of Communist reforms but simply a product of the changing times and trends that began prior to the Soviet take-over.[173] In a stratum where materialism was of such high importance, altering the material world also had a great influence on ones external perception.

Combined with the experience of two large-scale global wars and international troop movement (primarily conscripted from the peasantry), the traditional lifestyle of the villagers were no longer limited to the land they tilled. More noticeable was a change in the peasantry's work ethics and the importance of the family unit. Here again, age played a key role in determining the peasant's approach to both.

[170] SF No. 235.
[171] SF No. 72-M.
[172] SF No. 152.
[173] SF No. F-84.

3.3 Work Ethics and the Family Unit

In the household itself, the traditional power hierarchy faced challenges that were previously held in check by a rigid patriarchal structure as well as the threat of public shame. However, the new role of the youth as part of the family economic unit and the constant inundation of Communist ideology through educational programs and propaganda presented a challenge to the authority of the eldest male. Under the Communist regime, family cohesion and interdependence was constantly undermined, and methods to cope with the divergent attitudes of the youth were desperately sought. In addition, the peasant's approach to work, his attitude of performing a job well done, diminished in view of the menial gains achieved for higher productivity.[174]

The previous system of agricultural labour employed the assistance of both familial ties and communal assistance. The aid of neighbours and the landless peasantry was essential come harvest season. Payment for labour was returned in kind, or in other forms such as providing meals or the use of equipment such as a thresher. It is important to note that reciprocal relationships were not family exclusive, but were broadly available to the community, pending amicable relationships.[175] However, under collectivization social relationships rigified to such an extent that it severely affected the reciprocal economy outside the family. No longer were day labourers employed, nor were non-family members asked to assist in crop harvesting.[176] Much of this was brought about by the peasant's great need to engage in work that did not permit time for assisting others. Additionally, to employ the assistance of members outside the family was politically stigmatized under the Communist regime as the action of a kulak.

[174] Fred E. Dohrs, "Incentives in Communist Agriculture: The Hungarian Models." *Slavic Review* 27, no. 1 (Mar., 1968): 25.
[175] Bell, *Peasants in Socialist Transition*: 73.
[176] SF No. 26-M.

The number of family members inhabiting each dwelling also increased. In the prewar period it was not uncommon to see three generations of a family sharing a dwelling, or to have dwellings next to each other. Economic dependency and poor living conditions (lack of furniture, insufficient funds for building maintenance) forced many families to co-habitate. In some instances, there would even be more than one family unit sharing a dwelling. Subject No. 152, who worked in a kilning factory and had a monthly income of 1,400 forints, was forced to live with his in-laws due to poor housing conditions, raising the total inhabitants of the dwelling to six.[177] The new family unit, although fractured by the fact that both parents had to work and the children spent their days within State day nurseries or schools learning about the great accomplishments of socialism, still formed a "defensive and offensive alliance" against economic hardships by utilizing each others' free time and labour.[178] If the family unit was strong, the material difficulties were much less than in other families, as was the ability to deflect Party propaganda aimed at the youth.

In other situations, working mother's sometimes became despondent and apathetic, severely impacting the family unit and its cohesion. The routine of one mother in the Subject Files indicated that she woke up at 5am to bring her sleeping children to the day nursery, only to see them again in the evening in time to make dinner and put them again to bed.[179] The transition from maternal home-maker to unskilled worker was a difficult and often damaging process, for both the mother and the family. Family events that would have previously slowed the process of despondency in the family unit, such as church-going, was prevented in all but the most remote villages due to the seven-day work week or was hindered by the secularization campaign.[180] The most notable concern regarding the nature

[177] SF No. 152.
[178] SF No. 152.
[179] SF No. F-84.
[180] SF No. 302.

of the family unit among the peasantry was the impact financial needs had on the lives of the children.

Parents often introduced their children to work at a much earlier age, "hardly waiting until he gets 15 years old", due to the family's need to attain additional sources of income.[181] As a result of this earlier exposure and the vicissitudes of the Stalinist model, the children of peasant stock developed quite different attitude towards work than their parents. Not only did economic needs prevent children from attending school, it also infused them with a greater sense of self, much to the detriment of the parents. "Often a 20 year-old son as a skilled labourer makes 1,500-2,000 forints while father on the same job for 25-30 years makes much less".[182] Higher incomes for the youth, meant to win them over to the cause of building socialism, often bred ill-manners and a sense of superiority to their parents. This sometimes resulted in an over-inflated sense of ability and worth, and the children would leave home at a much earlier age than in previous years, upsetting the delicate economic structure of the family unit.

The youth also worked for money, not for existential reasons of developing a sense of purpose or defining their *Weltanshauung*, as had been characteristic of their parents. In other instances, the youth left home in search of employment not with the goal of supplementing the family income but to escape the hardships of rural life.[183] As noted by Subject No. 235, working in the local granary was less appealing than working in the mines, even though the work was lighter in the granary; the latter was a 7-day a week job while working in the mines was based on shift work, and he was paid for his time instead of his efforts.[184]

[181] SF No. 461.
[182] SF No. 152.
[183] Coulter, "The Hungarian Peasantry: 1948-1956" : 548.
[184] SF No. 235.

The attitude of working for money and not for quality or personal fulfillment was not exclusive to the youth, and soon found commonplace among the older generation as well, although with greater reluctance. The older generation was affected not by the economic system's characters but in what it lacked. As Martha Lampland writes, "representatives of a party founded to proclaim the dignity of labor violated the sanctity of work by refusing to 'possess objects'… [and] peasants traditionally celebrated the dignity of labor and the solidarity of autonomy".[185] This reality manifested itself everywhere, from the seizure of animals, confiscation of furniture for tax arrears, and the absence of land ownership. Even the State cooperative stores, for many of the peasantry the only place to acquire basic products such as lard or clothing, manifested the deprivation of possession implemented by the regime. Most State stores, once empty, would not attempt to secure more goods for the local population since the store operators received an hourly wage, thus not having anything to sell meant receiving payment for no work.[186]

The ethical conflict between the old versus new meanings of work developed into a new way of approaching work. The reconfiguration of work also generated a type of counter-culture to the State command economy, relying upon the deficiencies of the centralized economy and over bureaucratization to swindle the government for personal gains. In industry, (peasant-) workers would establish a positive relationship with the managers, as long as he was not ideologically embedded in the Communist system, whereby modifications would be made to ease the burdens imposed by the norm system.[187] For example, since the norms were established at the State level there was no means of altering those numbers. However, it was possible to increase the distances between the equipment and the materials to make it appear as though there was more work involved, and thus

[185] Lampland, "Pigs, Party Secretaries, and Private Lives in Hungary" : 475.
[186] SF No. 16-M.
[187] SF No. 562.

acquiring a higher pay for the same amount of labour.[188] Similar approaches were taken in the form of watering down milk, making bread with barley, or by hand threshing the harvest before the delivery collector arrived.[189]

Employing deception for self-benefit also acted as a form of passive resistance. For the peasantry, open rebellion was not an option, leaving them to express their disdain for the system through less-apparent actions. Acts of passive resistance and cheating the norms contributed to the peasant's ability to achieve a marginal degree of quality living. Additionally, the emergence of a second economy played a crucial role in the survival of the peasant long before small market operations were permitted under Kádár's New Economic Mechanism in 1966.

3.4 The Role of Second Economy

> Imagine an independent tradesman who is used to independence gets 150 forints as an advance from his cooperative. It is not enough for food for his family, so what does he do? He accepts a black job.[190]

The introduction of the money economy in agricultural regions meant the commodification of labour and goods. The pre-Soviet incipient market system in the countryside was informal in character, with bartering as the primary mode of exchanging goods and services.[191] In some instances where funds were short, the goods were exchanged for labour in the fields of the supplier. This trend towards a capitalist market continued into the postwar period, allowing for the alleviation of some personal losses in agricultural regions that were incurred during the Second World War by growing cash

[188] SF No. 562.
[189] SF No. 226.
[190] SF No. 525.
[191] Coulter, "The Hungarian Peasantry: 1948-1956" : 548.

crops, which also meant a change in crop production to higher profit-yielding goods such as potatoes or corn.[192]

The second economy was comprised of goods acquired from the State, and assisted in providing products often in short supply in State-run stores.[193] The function of the second economy, or black market, was threefold. It provided a means of fulfilling shortages in government-manufactured products, provided a means of resistance to Communism, and filled the void created by the absence of reciprocal relationships.[194] It should be mentioned that the black market was by no means an isolated development. Starting in Russia with the emergence of the *blat* after Lenin introduced his New Economic Policy, the same second economy materialized in every subsequent Soviet-controlled nation.[195]

The black markets were typically operated by a small group of friends who were well connected and knew who could be trusted from those who worked for the Party.[196] In communities where the officials were known to support the rural population or were corrupt, access to the black market became a common occurrence, even taking place in the local State stores. Subject No. 16-M explicates well the situation in Bores (Győr County) where the population (approximately 1,000) and the black market flourished. According to Subject No. 16-M, both the village council and the Blue Police took advantage of the black market system to acquire goods not available through State channels. Even in cases where a peasant wished to kill a calf for its meat, all that was needed was the permission of the chairman and a small gift for him and the local police.[197]

[192] Hollos and Maday, eds., *New Hungarian Peasants: An East Central European Experience with Collectivization*: 39.
[193] Verdery, "Anthropology of Socialist Societies" : 9.
[194] Hollos and Maday, eds., *New Hungarian Peasants: An East Central European Experience with Collectivization*: 16.
[195] Verdery, *The Vanishing Hectare: Property and Value in Postsocialist Transylvania*: 8.
[196] SF No. 72-M.
[197] SF No. 16-M.

Prices of goods varied based on their availability. For example, rice could cost as much as 46 forints for two pounds, whereas wrist watches could be purchased at almost hlf the price listed in State stores.[198] The advantage in the black market, aside from readily available goods, was the fact that most of the items were of higher quality than what was distributed by the State.[199] The reason for the higher quality of goods was, as mentioned before, that most of the peasants preferred to ruin the produce they delivered to the State and either consume the better produce themselves or sell it on the black market to supplement their income.[200]

The participation of the youth in the black market differed from the participation of the rest of the peasants. For the youth, the black market was not utilized to supplement their basic standard of living but to make money.[201] As Subject No. 21-M illustrates, he and his friends bought a number of watched from Russian soldiers for 300 forints, and then turned around and sold them for 700 forints. In the State stores, similar watches would cost 1200 forints and was usually inferior in quality.[202]

The second economy was not simply about goods, but also about selling ones skills to other members of the community in exchange for goods in kind. This was called black work, and resembled the reciprocal relationships that existed in the pre-Soviet period. Instead of the reciprocity being based off work in kind, however, it was much more entrepreneurial in the sense that an individual with certain skills was employed to perform contract-style jobs and received payment in the form of, say, flour or meat.[203] The similarity to reciprocal relations is in the fact that black work was available to everyone

[198] SF No. F-84.
[199] SF No. F-84.
[200] SF No. 21-M.
[201] Lampland, "Pigs, Party Secretaries, and Private Lives in Hungary" : 473.
[202] SF No. 21-M.
[203] SF No. 525.

within the community that was on good terms with the individual, and also that it was not paid for in cash.

For a number of peasants black work was the only means of survival, particularly the landless peasant. This work was typically done during low production periods in the industrial sectors or during any free time.[204] The value in performing unofficial work was the additional source of goods and, arguably, the social prestige assigned to such activities. It is reasonable to say that for much of the older peasantry, such work would enhance ones social position and also merit a certain degree of respect. One aspect of the emergence of the black market and of black work is that without it a large portion of the peasantry would have been without the necessary provisions to survive in the countryside.

Chapter Conclusions

The introduction of the command economy invariably altered the peasantry's outlook and approach to numerous traditional concepts. The integration of the peasant into the industrial and socialist wage labour economy created a dual identity, part peasant, part worker. The process of integration did not create a new man but it did act as a catalyst to bridged the divisions between the two classes, especially when the hardships in the fields also materialized in the factories. The peasant-worker had to adapt to an environment based on shift work and inadequate materials to fulfill the norms, and then return to the farm at night to continue working in the fields.

As a result of the pressures surrounding the possession of work and material gains, there was a noticeable change in the work ethic of the peasantry. Since production norms always seemed to be ambitious (if not utopian), a depreciation in the quality of his work and even undermining his own efficiency became commonplace. No longer were his aims in labour to perform admirably and produce efficiently, but to find shortcuts and means of

[204] SF No. 525.

hampering the centralized economic system. In the experience of the youth, work was money; no more, and no less.

The family unit also experienced a transmutation. The bonds of the family, previously held in check through a rigid and patriarchal protocol, began to deteriorate in view of pressing financial crises and the need to mobilize all available labour; child and adult. The repercussions of this was one of two extremes: either a solidification of the family unit into a cohesive and supportive body, completely dependent on each other for their daily bread, or a deterioration in relations due to the integration of the youth and both parents into the labour force, which directly challenged the traditional model of familial roles.

The development of a second economy aided in providing much-needed goods to the peasantry not always available in State stores. Black markets were ubiquitous throughout Hungary, and black work along with it. Any means of supplementing material goods or skills was greatly nurtured by the fallacies of the Communist state, and provided a common medium for passive resistance to the regime. While the peasantry was able to express their opposition to the economic reforms through these channels, it was much harder for them to express their disdain for the on-going social engineering program that was directly aimed at their children. The war against the family was fought on both an economic level and a social level. As will be illustrated in the next chapter, the Party's war against the family took intentional steps to purge the traditional forms of familial bonds unlike the unintentional economic fumbling under collectivization.

4. Redefining Social Values

> The weakness of the [communist] system is its totalitarian character, due to which they left out the role of the human person from their calculation.[205]

Widespread financial depravity experienced by the peasantry was but one dimension of the ramifications to accompany the implementation of the Stalinist economic model in Hungary. Challenges to the traditional interpretations of right and wrong, approaches to courtship as well as the established protocol between the sexes, faced increased opposition by the policies and tactics of the Hungarian Communists.[206] Soviet-style social engineering employed several lines of attack aimed at restructuring Hungarian society into a unified industrial production unit of rank-and-file proletariats. The implementation of a war against the family was introduced in order to weaken the importance of familial bonds and replace them with an unwavering loyalty the State, in order to mechanize the population and achieve the Party's ambitious economic goals. The peasantry's reaction to this invasion of its most private spheres generated varied attempts at adaptation, re-education, and reorganization of family power relations. In some instances, such as marriage, the peasantry was often left impotent and could only hope that their attempts at imbuing their children with their own traditional values had formed deeper roots than that of the regimes ideological considerations.

The definition of "social values" will be borrowed from anthropologist Kata Jávor, and represent "all the socially defined goals, material or psychological, the realization of which is attempted by members of a given community".[207] In keeping with her definition,

[205] SF No. 413.
[206] SF No. 72-m.
[207] Jávor in Hollos and Maday, eds., *New Hungarian Peasants: An East Central European Experience with Collectivization*: 275.

moral judgements will also be incorporated due to its inseparability in discussions on social values.

Within the CURPH interviews, challenges to traditional social value system, generated by the political system, figures quite prominently among the peasantry's concerns.[208] Although religiosity played as significant role, it typically received only passing mentions from the subjects. In general, almost all participants were in agreement that religious education is important and that children "should be taught to fear God from a very tender age".[209] However, the depth of analysis on the moral implications of secularization tends to stop there, leaving a great deal of speculation (without further investigation into non-rural subject files) of religions' role in moulding the morality of the population. The same is true of information on the education system, but due to the use of the scholastic environment as a platform for social engineering, it does receive some attention in the discussion below.

This chapter will focus specifically on three themes. First, the social implications and definition of theft in the traditional peasant mentality, were previously considered socially unacceptable. Under the socio-economic hardships of rapid Stalinization, the definition and prominence of falsehoods adopted new meanings and also developed a new parameter of socially acceptable terms of use. Additionally, the commonplace nature of lying reached unprecedented levels of openness not previously experienced by the peasant class. Delinquency and theft will be addressed within the same context, while the social context of lying and re-education will constitute a separate subchapter.

Secondly, the oldest and arguably most life-defining of all social engagements, the interaction between men and women and the ritual of courtship, also adopted a new guise. No longer was the institute of marriage strictly regulated by the family, nor was the process

[208] SF No. 525.
[209] SF No. F-84.

of courtship itself. The ability for both sexes to interact at a younger age, and in a less regulated environment, deviated so strongly from its traditional character that even the subjects of adolescent age took notice enough to comment in the interviews.

Amongst the three areas of examination, theft figures quite prominently, often associated with the peasantry's ability to subsist materially and psychologically. In response to the hardships of providing for oneself and the family, actions involving theft or delinquency no longer remained within the domain of the poor and destitute, but found utility amongst the former small landholders and middle peasant.

An underlying theme to this chapter that ties it to the Communist Party's efforts to establish an efficient and functional command economy is the Soviet experiment in social engineering. As indicated by one politically-sensitive Subject, "Révai repeatedly asserted in Parliament in 1948 that the communist regime, the workers' rule, will…be completely established [only] if the communists succeed in bringing up a generation of fully communist mentality and action".[210] According to Subject No. 152:

> It is much easier to control and to direct a young man's life if he does not reside in a closed family circle where there is a different, antagonistic air, a unit which formulates and enforces its own laws on its members. This is the reason why the communists were so eager to create artificial barriers among the family members, this is the explanation of their wage-politics, whereby they forced every able family member to work. While they never dared to openly admit these objectives, i.e., the destruction of the family, they utilized every means at their disposal to bring this about.

Social anthropologist takes this position as well, indicating that language was used to create anticipation of great achievements to come if the population adopted and adhered to their programs for recreating society, taking advantage of education and thick bureaucracy to intercede in the lives of the population. The Party ritualized everyday life to provide for the greatest amount of exposure to Communist

[210] SF No. 152.

ideology and social engineering propaganda.[211]. The constant atmosphere of lies, delinquency, and liberalization of gender interaction were integrated as elements of a campaign to deconstruct traditional bonds within the community and within the family unit.[212]

4.1 Theft versus Procurement

> Everybody steals in the communist system and the higher somebody is the more he steals. The poor barber could not steal more than a few forints. The bookkeeper of the large state enterprise could embezzle 10,000 forints. And the bigwigs in Budapest steal millions.[213]

The main causality of peasant delinquency was widespread "poverty and desperation".[214] Due to the ubiquitous nature of theft, a differentiation materialized between stealing and "procurement". This term was best defined by Subject No.152, who clearly elaborated the difference between stealing and wage-supplementing: "Stealing is…when a person steals personal belongings from another. The taking away or 'procuring' of material which more or less does not belong to anybody is definitely not stealing".[215] The property of the State was generally accepted to fall into the second category listed, a fact repeatedly enforced by the peasants' willingness to turn a blind eye to individuals who filled their pockets with coal from the mines or wood from the State-owned forests.

Subject No. 152, who was an active member of the Smallholders' Party member during the coalition government from 1945-1947, goes into detail as to why he saw instances of theft as such a widespread and socially accepted phenomenon. He claimed that

[211] Katherine Verdery, "Anthropology of Socialist Societies" in *International Encyclopedia of the Social and Behavioral Sciences*: 9.
[212] SF No. 152.
[213] SF No. 525.
[214] SF No. 21-m.
[215] SF No. 152.

due to the centrally planned economy and over bureaucratization of production, the State was unable to efficiently deal with the weight of its own tasks. "All kinds of materials, raw and finished, were shipped around needlessly, in a rather complicated, roundabout way".[216] As the peasantry witnessed materials and produce sitting idle and wasting in the fields or warehouses, many of them thought it only reasonable to procure quantities of the goods before they became unusable. In effect, they rationalized their actions as "saving" the materials from wasting away.[217]

The government attempted on several occasions to marshal support against individuals who procured goods from the State, but always with little success. Although theft was seen by the Party as sabotage, and if caught the subject faced several years' hard labour in Hortobágy (in Hajdú-Bihar County), most of the population was unconvinced that what they were doing to survive was in any way a misdemeanour. Promotion of theft prevention failed as a consequence of the hypocritical stance of the government. At the same time the Party officials tried to wage a war against the illegal procurement of State property, they encouraged children to steal from the kulak as part of the ongoing class war in the countryside.[218]

Rationalizing acts of theft also developed a duality in meaning. Aside from being a form of supplementing ones income, it was also a means of political demonstration against the government.[219] Although instances of open resistance were rare due to the very real threat of deportation, forms of passive resistance such as stealing or cheating in work norms was a means of protest that was available to the peasantry, and risked only a marginal

[216] SF No. 152.
[217] SF No. 152.
[218] SF No. 26-m.
[219] SF No. 525.

possibility of discovery. For many individuals "stealing was pretty much the same kind of political demonstration as going to church".[220]

However, the social norms surrounding theft were not ubiquitous and typically varied based upon the level of economic success of the community as a whole. For example, in one notably prosperous collective, the locals discovered that an old man was stealing clovers from the communally-cultivated fields. In response the community approached him and demanded that in exchange for the clovers he had taken he should perform additional labour on the collective farm.[221] The Subject File indicates that the old man was more than happy to oblige, likely having felt that aside from stealing the clovers there was no alternate recourse to meet his needs. More importantly, what this case illustrates is that even amongst more prosperous agricultural communities there was a sense of communal protection and resistance to the State apparatus, since the old man was never reported to the authorities even though he had breached an accepted code of moral conduct. In this situation, the old man's delinquent behaviour, which in the past would have resulted in severe social repercussions, was not enough to rupture the communal resistance to the state apparatus.

The previous illustration of indivisible unity and rigidly adhered social conduct amongst the peasantry was not without exception. The youth, raised in a much more morally lax environment than their parents, did not always abide by the strict protocol involving procurement of state goods, and in some cases went as far as stealing from their friends and from the homes in which they were apprenticed.[222] However, these cases are isolated to only two instances within the interviews. It can be assumed that by their very mention that such conduct did occur, at the very least infrequently. Since village life was

[220] SF No. 525.
[221] SF No. 406.
[222] SF No. 72-m.

much more isolated than urban centers, there was a tendency for everyone to be well aware of the actions of others within the community. A community's ability to tabulate the actions, and even be informed about the past lives of villagers new and old was considered a means of protecting each other from the machinations of the Party. An example of this is a gentleman who arrived in a new village (Subject did not disclose the village name) in 1953 after spending 3 years in prison for membership in the Independent Smallholders' Party. Within days of his arrival in the new village he became aware that the entire village knew of his previous exploits, time in a prison in Recsk (Heves County), and that he was currently under police surveillance.[223]

Of greater concern to the peasantry was the inundation of Party propaganda into the minds of the children. At every turn the peasantry faced the arduous task of re-educating the youth. From State-directed schools to evening social gatherings, the peasant had to diligently monitor what "Communist lies" had recently been impressed into the minds of the next generation. In many cases, the parents displayed mixed emotions of fear and hopelessness. However, the fruits of their labours were not always as grim as the tone of their words suggest.

4.2 Duality and Combating Party Propaganda (Re-educating the Youth)

Each Subject File employed in this study makes reference to a general decline in morality after 1945. The majority of the peasants accredit this change to an ongoing war against the family unit. The strategy of the Party was to weaken the bonds of family ties in order to effectively recreate the population into the "new man".[224] In supporting the notion of the Party's clandestine activities against the family unit, subjects often discuss how they were constantly forced to teach their children to lie in order to protect the family from State

[223] SF No. 152.
[224] SF No. 226.

harassment. Many parents feared what their child may reveal about their family discussions or illegal actions while in public or when being questioned by Party officials about issues pertaining to home life.[225] As a result, re-education and the ability to lie rose in prominence to ensure the security of the family unit.

One of the Party's most influential tools of social engineering was the education system. Following the Nationalization Act on 16 June 1948, a new curriculum was introduced that aimed at indoctrinating the youth with heavily biased Communist ideology. In the medium of the classroom, the Party was able to propagate the class warfare and expound the virtues of a socialist system.[226] Parents viewed the education system with utter disdain, and felt that "their children were exposed to a never-ending process of alienation and estrangement…and each day [the parents] fought a battle to re-conquer their children's trust and love and affection".[227] In addition to schools, numerous youth organizations such as the Youth Congress or the Democratic Organization of Hungarian Women (MNDSZ) were established by the Party and were responsible for arranging cultural activities such as dances and meetings, where Party officials would inundate children with Socialist rhetoric, while unprotected by their parents. This extended into the lives of the parents as well who "were kept in the shops even after the workday ended. Sports events, entertainments, common excursions and parties were held at the factory, not to mention the various meetings and seminars and production conferences. In a word, the place of work became the center of a man's life".[228]

The methods available to parents to minimize the ill-effects of a Communist education and social upbringing were varied. In rare cases, parents would simply disallow

[225] SF No. 26-m.
[226] SF No. 21-m, SF No. 152.
[227] SF No. 152.
[228] SF No. 54-m.

their children to attend school beyond the elementary level.[229] More commonly employed methods included a form of re-education in which the parents would question their children on the content of their studies, after which they would spend several hours carefully explaining "a truth which was true only in our family circle, but not in school".[230] Convincing ones child of an alternate (family-rooted) version of the truth was often an easy enough task, as contradictory evidence that discredited the Party's ideological rhetoric regarding the greatness of the socialist system lost any persuasive character the moment a child returned to the very real and squalid conditions in which his family existed.

The duality of life under the Communist regime created two distinct atmospheres of dialogue, strongly delineated as public and private. Each sphere had language that was particular to itself. The meaning of language in this case is interpreted as the ability and practice of children (as well as adults) to distinguish between acceptable topics of discourse in public versus topics open for discussion within the family unit.

The effectiveness of the re-education process and constructed duality in language generated two effects. First was the creation of a Janus-faced youth, who had been forced to construct two identities (or more if there was some involvement with an unofficial organization). Although the parents attempted to educate their children, constantly reiterating lessons on the old and traditional codes of behaviour and morality, there was no means for parents to alleviate their concerns about the affects of the communist rhetoric upon their child's sensibilities.[231]

While the majority of the peasantry was not seriously concerned that their child would become a full-fledged Communist,[232] they associated changes in the youth's attitude with communist influence, disregarding of other influences not associated with the

[229] SF No. 238.
[230] SF No. 152.
[231] SF No. 152.
[232] SF No. F-84.

regime.[233] It was, in fact, hard to elucidate exactly what influence the communist system had upon the youth at all: an evident by-product of their education in duality. The youth, living in a world where "people could not speak the truth, could not reveal what was on their minds" had become so successful at disguising their inner thoughts and emotions that parents could hardly tell how "Communized" the children had become.[234]

The effects of Communist propaganda, and the war against the family unit, extended beyond the boundaries of the education system, and infiltrated the institutions of the family unit at the grassroots level. The interaction between people was dramatically affected by the policies and programs aimed at engineering socialism's "new man". In many cases, the peasantry watched the changes manifest in the interaction between the sexes.

4.3 Re-defining the Institution of Love

"Now my ideal is the housewife,
My greatest wish, a quiet life
And a big bowl of cabbage soup"

-Aleksandr Pushkin's *Onegin Travels*[235]

At the centre of the Hungarian peasant's life-cycle was the institution of marriage. From a very young age the rules of engagement between children and adults, boys and girls, were clearly defined in accordance to a strict set of protocols and social conditions. Parents with children had to consider several factors to ensure the prosperity of their offspring. For

[233] Examples of various non-communist influences upon the youth include cultural trends and material goods from the West. Often items, such as clothing, breached the Iron Curtain surrounding Hungary and landed in Budapest's black market or in the villages. In some instances, subjects would discuss how they had received a suit from relatives in America or even monetary assistance. In the major urban centres, children exposed to American culture attempted to imitate it, forming a group known as JAMPEC. Typical dress was in the style of the U.S. zoot suitors. The Party waged an unsuccessful campaign against JAMPEC and proclaimed their style and attitude 'barbaric'. This fashion and cultural fad was known by all the subjects under the age of 25, and none held negative perceptions, but in some cases it did generate an air of deep curiosity of seem even mysterious to the youth. SF No. 226.
[234] SF No. 152.
[235] Roy D. Laird, *Soviet Agricultural and Peasant Affairs.* (Kansas: University of Kansas Press, 1963): 3.

example, in the pre-1945 atmosphere the financial stability and material well-being of both partners was a major concern.[236] Class origin, while not being a barrier to general social interaction, was a very real barrier to the selection of possible life partners.[237] The role of the parent in all of this was extremely heavy-handed, but after collectivization was introduced, and both parents were forced to seek secondary employment and/or occupy themselves for long hours in the field or in the factory, the State adopted the role formerly occupied by the parents.

The period under examination illustrated a change in moral behaviour throughout Hungary. Typically, the most visible degree of change in gender interaction occurred in the densely-populated urban centres, becoming relatively weaker the further the population centre was from major urban environments. The estrangement of the children from their parents was also seen by the peasants as being much less than in the urban centres.[238] Since a fair number of the subject's engaged in some level of interaction (usually in the form of unskilled labour) it can be argued that while the peasantry's rural-urban bias' likely manifested in the interviews, their experience in the urban environment cannot be wholly discredited as incorrect due to the favourable attitude of several subject's towards the city folk.

Platforms for Interaction

The Communist Party primarily exercised their influence upon the peasant youth in three settings: local meetings, schools, and work environments. These social platforms each served the additional function of providing places of interaction that were negatively perceived by parents for being unsupervised. In pre-Soviet times, the interaction between the youth was divided by gender, with a more rigid structure imposed on females.

[236] SF No. 226.
[237] SF No. 26-M.
[238] SF No. 238.

Anthropologist Peter Bell makes mention of this in his analysis of the pre-1945 peasant social norms, indicating that "girls…met less often, the scope of their activities was more circumscribed, and they did not have the freedom of their male counterparts".[239] Mass mobilization of the population eliminated this tradition almost entirely, which had been progressively waning in urban centres, such as Budapest, as early as the inter-war period.

The conventional means of introduction to the opposite sex (via common acquaintances) was no longer controlled by parents or limited to childhood friends, but became subject to a combination of economic necessity and mandatory attendance at various Party-organized social functions.[240] Many of the Subject Files make mention of long Party meetings and poor economic conditions creating an atmosphere devoid of adequate stimuli.[241] A number of the Subjects even went so far as to condemn the Party for luring children to its ideology by promoting sexual promiscuity and drinking during Party meetings.[242] While the Party did not openly engage in propaganda to this effect, their economic and social policies definitely did favour activity that denigrated family bonds and also forced the integration of women into the traditionally male-dominated labour work force.[243]

Education often played a large part in youth interaction and social integration. Following the nationalization of schools under the Communist Party, all student dormitories became co-educational, as did the classrooms. The majority of peasant class students who pursued education beyond the elementary level had no option but to move from the villages

[239] Bell, *Peasants in Socialist Transition*: 68.
[240] SF No. 21-M.
[241] SF No. 445.
[242] SF No. 426.
[243] It was the government's intention in 1949 to increase employment numbers by 500,000, primarily in fields of skilled labour. This increase was impossible without the integration of women into the workforce, especially in view of the losses in population following World War II. Lynne Haney, *Inventing the Needy: gender and the politics of welfare in Hungary*: 32.

to nearby urban centres where higher level education facilities were located. The same was also true for the youth who pursued an apprenticeship in the specialized trades. In their new environments, many of them "indulged in sexual affairs more readily".[244] While co-education provided numerous benefits, such as a deterioration of gender-based barriers for interaction, it also generated great excesses in promiscuity when combined with a lack of communal supervision and socialism's liberalization effect.[245]

Promiscuity

The Party also promoted promiscuity through various campaigns aimed at celebrating the virtue of motherhood and child-rearing.[246] From 1948 to 1956, legal reforms regarding abortion, wage garnishing for absent fathers, and promoting the cause of the independent woman, all contributed to creating a social atmosphere that promised to provide support for extra-marital children and their mothers. "The regime encouraged childbirth outside the family. In the fifties, official placards proclaimed that giving birth to a child was the obligation of the mother, but it was glory in the case of an unwed girl".[247] In fact, parents whose daughters would return home with news of pregnancy outside of marriage were protected by the State from any parental punishments on pain of being fined.[248] The success of the campaign to challenge the hegemony of the family unit was undeniable, even though in the villages it was not as widespread as in the cities. In Subject File No. 403, the respondent indicated that in most villages there were at least five or six bastards[249] and abortions were not unheard of, despite State legislation preventing the termination of

[244] SF No. 72-M.
[245] SF No. 152.
[246] SF No. 445.
[247] SF No. 152.
[248] SF No. 54-M.
[249] SF No. 152.

pregnancies, providing evidence that the youth within the villages were by no means immune to such excesses.[250]

Schools also became hotbeds of sexual activity, especially due to the shared dormitory environment, or lacking a co-ed dormitory, the loose rules governing nightly visits.[251] Some of the peasant girls who attended school away from their family (but by no means a significant proportion) even chose to supplement their meagre State stipend through prostitution. This was not only true of school girls but also of women in the workforce who similarly found financial hardships too difficult at times and "worked only with their rear ends" in hopes for financial improvement.[252]

The experience for boys was not much different, either in the city or the villages. In a number of cases, males as young as 16 years old would indulge in local or nearby brothels. When the Communist Party shut down the brothels, they simply followed the prostitutes to their homes, which functioned as the latter's new place of business.[253] However, the traditional views of sexual activity remained quite strong in the parents of the peasant youth. For example, Subject No. 79-M had his first sexual encounter at the age of 14 with his 13 year old female neighbour. Upon being discovered by the neighbour's mother, both of them received on-the-spot corporal punishment for their misdeeds.[254]

However, at later ages this type of punishment was less frequent. The reason behind this was the youth's ability to achieve economic independence at a much earlier age. Additionally, the social stigma attached to a female leaving home before being married

[250] Under Anna Ratko, Minister of National Welfare (called the Minister of Health after 1952) from 1949-1956, legislation was introduced in Hungary to combat falling birthrates, and included the closure of all abortion clinics and criminalization of abortions or the use of birth control in 1953. Haney, *Inventing the Needy: gender and the politics of welfare in Hungary*: 32.
[251] SF No. 26-M.
[252] SF No. 79-M.
[253] SF No. 79-M.
[254] SF No. 79-M.

often stayed the hand of angry parents, who traditionally punished such acts as remaining out too late with physical consequences.[255] At the same time, most parents did not automatically assume that all the youth who stayed out late or left the village for educational or employment reasons would succumb to moral depravity; that judgement was saved for those individuals who left the village and later returned as members of the Communist Party.[256] But in some instances, much to the astonishment of the parents, the youth returned not indoctrinated with Party ideology but with a girlfriend or fiancée.[257]

Courtship

The ritual of courtship had lost some of its key features by the interwar period, becoming accelerated by the liberalizing characteristics of the Communist Party, and it also became more common at a younger age than in previous years.[258] "Young people were much more at ease when together, their relations were far less constrained than before, and their conversation as well as their social contacts lost much of their former stiffness and formality, to be replaced by easygoing, light, and, to a certain extent, more human and natural way. Young people were, in a word, free from social and ethical pressure or restraint".[259] While parents did not exercise such rigid control in the interwar period regarding who their child wanted to wed, they did hold a veto power, usually in the form of land and property. If the proposed couple had not managed to independently establish themselves by the time their intention to marry was announced, the parents possessed a strong influence in the arrangement.[260] Following the imposition of collectivization, the

[255] SF No. 79-M.
[256] SF No. 525.
[257] SF No. 461.
[258] SF No. 152.
[259] SF No. 152.
[260] Bell, *Peasants in Socialist Transition*: 62.

influence of the parents in the decision-making process of a spouse-selection was replaced by State doctrine and Party functionaries.[261]

In schools, word of a possible matrimonial union quickly became a topic of debate for the Communist student organization known as DISZ; a faction of youth populated by individuals who either believed in the Communist ideology or were forced to join out of fear or career-minded manoeuvring. The members of DISZ who represented the hard-line ideologues would often hold meetings debating the feasibility and benefits of certain couples proposed to wed. In one particular instance, a Subject who was courting a female student was forced to attend such a meeting that lasted until 2 am, at which point he marched out frustrated, proclaiming that who he married was none of their concern.[262] In the workplace, such attempts at disregarding Party scrutiny in personal matters were not as easy. All marriages had to be reported to the management. It was then at the discretion of the local Party representative whether to investigate the new spouses dossier (cadre file) and possibly disallow the marriage.[263]

The cadre file was so important in the consideration of possible marriage candidates that even the peasants who were not Party members or Communist ideologues invested considerable energies to assure that their fiancée was not in poor-standing with the State. The most common problem facing peasants interested in wedlock was whether their file made any mention of them being from a kulak family. The economic ruin and political pressures that accompanied association with a kulak or kulak's child was terrifying enough to terminate all but the strongest of proposed marriages.[264] For the individuals that did proceed despite the kulak label, they frequently lost their jobs and were forced to start their life anew elsewhere.

[261] SF No. 54-M.
[262] SF No. 406.
[263] SF No. 626.
[264] SF No. 16-M.

The actual length of an engagement also changed, often accelerated from the usual one year requirement to as little as two or four months. In the pre-1945 period, the majority of relationships went through stages of one year as acquaintances, followed by another year of courtship, and finally engagement.[265] Due to the material poverty of the population, the concept of economic security no longer played such a prominent role in marriage decisions. Additionally, the youth began to desire not stability (which seemed impossible while outside Party membership) but love.[266] In the past it was not uncommon for a married couple to learn to love each other some time after living as a couple in exchange for social prestige, amicable family relations, and/or financial stability. In the Soviet environment, it had become more desirable to marry for love first and foremost.

However, a number of marriages that formed during the period of Stalinization, including several that were created prior to the Second World War, proved to be much less stable under the Stalinist regime. The deterioration of the matrimonial home was a consequence of a number of factors, some emerging from personal differences, but many more resulting from the Party's ongoing war against the family unit and financial hardships.

Married Life

Several new features of marriage in the postwar period emphasized a radical break with the past. Social status, as previously mentioned, no longer restricted certain individuals from marriage considerations. Subject No. 226 exemplified this reality while discussing his own experience in courtship, describing with excitement his marriage to a schoolteacher, not only because she was the daughter of a rich peasant but also because of his limited sixth grade education. He quite avidly noted that while in the past such a union

[265] SF No. 54-M.
[266] SF No. 226.

was absolutely forbidden due to the differences in social prestige, under Communism it was absolutely permitted.[267]

For the previously discussed Subject, marrying a woman who also held fulltime employment was interpreted as a great success. For other peasant families the absence of a wife and mother from the home was perceived as an affront to the traditional family unit. From the social dimension, the Soviet imposition of equality among genders was seen by numerous men as defeminising, not only because it resigned the children to be raised by the State instead of a mother, but also because it introduced women to the male-dominated environment of the factory and workplace.[268] In addition, employed women were considered "less emotional" in the sense of what the term implied in the pre-Soviet period, meaning such female virtues as courtesy, motherhood, and being the guardian of morality in the family unit.[269]

The other major feature of the new institution of marriage was the age at which people were married. Almost all the subjects are in agreement that age at which individuals married was much younger than before Stalinism. Most of the interviews accredit earlier marriages, in addition to disparity and a desire for companionship, to greater financial possibilities for the youth at a younger age as well as the lack of governance by the parents'.[270] However, the majority of the peasant youth that stayed in the village tended to postpone having children due to financial hardships in the countryside, and also because both parents were working, leaving most peasants unable to properly raise their children even if they decided to start a family.[271]

[267] SF No. 226.
[268] SF No. 226.
[269] SF No. 226, SF No. 21-M, SF No. 72-M.
[270] SF No. 21-M.
[271] SF No. 226.

Divorce

One of the most radical features to accompany marriage reforms was an increase in divorce rates.[272] The process of attaining a divorce itself had changed under the Communist Party through the Family Law Act introduced in 1952. Divorces could now be filed by women as well as men, citing "serious or profound cause".[273] Additionally, divorces were not a very expensive or complicated matter, leaving little in the way to deter couples from separating.[274] However, most couples separated for reasons that they rationalized as being much more than a conflict of interest, typically blaming collectivization and secularization as destructive elements to the stability of their marriage and family.[275]

The major causes for divorce within rural communities were financial, ideological, and psychological. Following World War II and the long-term imprisonment of prisoners of war, there was a significant increase in divorce rates in Hungary. According to Subject File No. 152, "the husband came home [after eight years imprisonment] and, if the wife had not divorced him yet, both he and the wife soon found out how greatly they changed and the only way out was divorce".[276] Less extreme, but coincided with the same notion as above, were instances when men were forced to live apart from their family and wife for extended periods for employment reasons, which often placed a great amount of strain on the family unit and weakened/distanced the relationship between husband and wife.[277]

[272] SF No. 152: Subject speculates that the number of legally divorced women in Hungary in 1956 was 67,000, stressing that the number of women who are not officially divorced but living as such is projected to be much higher.
[273] In practice, the condition required for a divorce after 1952 was to fill out the appropriate paperwork, whereas under the legal system established in 1867, only the male could file for a divorce and the women had both no recourse or claim to property and wealth within the marriage. The new law assigned a fifty-fifty division of all property and assets. Béla Tomka, "Social Integration in 20th Century Europe: Evidences from Hungarian Family Development", *Journal of Social History* 35, no.2 (2001): 335.
[274] SF No. 152.
[275] SF No. 72-M.
[276] SF No. 152.
[277] SF No. 461.

The financial situation of the peasantry, as mentioned before, was irregular and unpredictable. Often young people would see advantageous job opportunities and assume their financial security would be assured in perpetuity. However, the randomness of the Party disallowed for any such security and in the cases where peasants made this realization there were often arguments regarding how to proceed and how to cope with the hardships, including whether the wife should work, to joining the Party, to the incessant and rampant alcoholism that emerged in the 1950s.[278] For a portion of the peasant youth drinking became a means of escape. For them, the future became quite aimless, which led to episodes of despair and apathy during periods of particular financial crises. According to one Subject File, people drank simply because there was not enough money to subsist regardless of what they spent their money on, and thus to them buying alcohol made no difference in the ability to acquire the daily bread.[279] As a result of this forlorn attitude towards the future, many couples found no reason to remain together, often divorcing and then moving back into the homes of their parents.

The last contributing factor to increased divorce rates was the Party's propaganda campaign. One of the two female Subjects within this study noted that individuals selected by the Communist Party for higher education often later returned to the villages and their wives, the latter often newly perceived as inadequate because they did not bathe daily or brush their teeth regularly.[280] In short, the men that returned to the villages saw their wives as simple, backwards, unkempt, and no longer suitable.[281]

[278] SF No. 16-M.
[279] SF No. 16-M.
[280] SF No. F-84.
[281] SF No. 26-M.

Chapter Conclusions

From 1949-1953, the deteriorating financial conditions of the peasantry, combined with a covert war against the family unit, which aimed at recreating the peasantry into a rank-and-file workforce that could meet the demands of heavy industrialization and collectivization, collided with a social class whose traditional character was already in the incipient stages of liberalization. The pre-Soviet period was not absent of marital infidelity or extra marital relations. However, the social stigma attached to such activity was so severe as to have those transgressing the accepted rules of interaction exercise a high degree of secrecy if they engaged in immoral activities.[282] The deconstruction of pre-established protocols of interaction resulted not only in accelerating the process of liberalization but also led to a great amount of excesses most notably among the peasant youth, who used sexual encounters as a means of escaping the depravities of everyday life.[283] This excess seeped into every aspect of interaction, resulting in unplanned pregnancies (out of wedlock), higher rates of divorce, and in some cases a fragmentation of the traditional family unit.

The financial needs of the family, combined with the parents' long workdays, deprived most children of much-needed childrearing, and in particular the absence of a positive role model to counterbalance the Communist Party's war against the family.[284] The time parents did have for their children was spent in attempts to reverse the damage caused by Party propaganda impressed upon them at school, during meetings, and in the workplace. In an attempt to protect their children and themselves, the parents would spend considerable time trying to impress their own truth into their children while enforcing the need for their children to maintain a duality in attitude and language while outside the home. Aside from this time-consuming interaction, the State imposed itself into the position of parental

[282] SF No. 152.
[283] SF No. 72-M.
[284] SF No. 54-M.

supervisor. As a result, the majority of parents were never wholly reassured that their children had avoided any detrimental affects from State rhetoric.

In the countryside, theft became procurement, and lies employed as a means of survival. The reorganization of acceptable social values was an adaptation, and in fact, none of the previous stigma attached to these acts disappeared. Instead, the peasants modified them to accommodate familial and communal needs at the material expense of the State. In the instances where breaches in the newly organized rules of conduct occurred, the bonds of the community superseded the State's interests. This was in part a response to a common experience of poverty, a means of passive resistance, and a means of rebuking the war against the family.

In the broader context, these three areas of examination provide an illustration of how deeply the policies of a command economy cut into the social spheres of the Hungarian peasantry. The two dimensions of this phenomenon is the intentional Party platform and actions previously mentioned actions, and the unintentionally (or unplanned) accelerated liberalization program operating relatively free of the traditional constraints that would have prevented the process from moving too rapidly into the excesses that developed.

Conclusions, Considerations, and Further Suggestions

An in-depth analysis of the Subject Files initially created by Columbia University provides significant first-hand insight into the major economic concerns and social conditions of the Hungarian smallholder and middle peasant. The Subject's attention to details and common concerns regarding social relations, transformed moral values, the Communists incessant attempts at social engineering, and their awareness of an increasing estrangement from the traditions of the past, indicate a stratum of society both conscious of itself and aware that only through adaptation was their continued existence sustainable. The first attempt to centralize agriculture through collectivization and propaganda deeply affected the peasantry on both a material and ideological level.

The pre-existing traditional model of peasant life involving politics was greatly increased in exposure through economic reforms and social engineering. In pre-Soviet times the peasant interacted with politics primarily at the local level, generally resigned to observation. Under the Communist regime, the peasant continued in this fashion but with a higher degree of local exposure in the form of meetings and a nearly inescapable reminder that his livelihood was dictated by a government directed by a foreign power. Although broad in its influence, the decision of the Party by no means managed to affect all villages with equal affluence, but was restricted by its own interests in developing the urban regions and heavy industry, resulting in a measurable degree of variety in intensity based on the proximity of certain villages to key urban centres.

Concepts of work and the social value traditionally tied to it were drastically redefined, particularly among the youth. Hard work became cliché, and theft or interacting with the second economy became the norm. The peasant, once socially separated from the working class, found interaction a financial necessity, and in most cases this resulted in a positive co-habitation that bridged differences and stereotypes in the face of a shared sense

of antagonism towards the Communist State. The peasant-worker performed both duties of his new social namesake, attempting to achieve a basic level of subsistence but at no time abandoning his old ways or shunning the new. However, the youth, not possessing the same deep-rooted concept of work, approached labour from a materialist perspective, interacting within it as a means of making money and not as a reward in and of itself. Additionally, engaging in the second economy included a margin of commercialization, further emphasizing the youth's redefinition of work from *Weltanshauung* to wage supplementing. Activities once considered deplorable, such as stealing or lying, became vindicated if done at the expense of the State. Again, the degree of acceptability and the extent of changes in socially acceptable behaviour was dictated by a village's proximity to urban centres, while acts of passive resistance against the State were not.

The war against the family, meant to destroy household bonds through a variety of institutions and time-consuming activities, weighed heavily upon the conscious's of all the Subjects. The youth displayed attitudes divergent from traditional means of interaction and social activities. The ability of the parent to curb the seemingly destructive nature of Party propaganda was limited to attempts at re-education and relying on the prevalent contradictions in State ideology compared to the realities of everyday life. The youth, imbued with an inflated sense of worth in some cases, embraced the new atmosphere of co-ed interaction, often engaging in intimacy much earlier in life, and in some instances being forced to deal with certain unexpected consequences such as children or a divorce.

The effects of economic planning and social engineering by the Communist Party manifested most prominently within the youth, often developing alternate approaches if not radically divergent, in comparison to the generation of their parents. While the parents adapted as best they could to the situation as it presented itself, the youth truly developed a duality when dealing with the public sphere, in a similar yet spectrally opposite way their

parents became peasant-workers. The need to lead a double-life provided the youth with a means of combating propaganda yet allowed them to maintain a level of individuality separate from the Party line. Although the concept of duality can be applied to work ethics and social values, it is its manifestation in the youth that best illustrate this phenomenon. As Subject No. 152 indicated, the majority of the population truly believed the generation raised during the Communist era had lost their way. Only with the spontaneous uprising against the regime in October 1956 were the older generation relieved of their concerns as to the ill-effects of the Communist system upon the youth.[285] Since the Communists could not eliminate all pre-existing social practices through their policies, remoulding the population into their ideologically constructed "new man" was not feasible.

The general character sketch of a small landowner or middle peasant who remained outside the collectives during the first wave of collectivization was determined by three factors: age, location, and financial success. For a middle-aged peasant living in Baja, approximately 60 kilometres from the urban centre of Pécs, the need to find employment in industry would have been undeniable, as would the need to mobilize other members of the family into wage-earning jobs. However, the degree of influence exercised ideologically through Party organized events would have been weaker due to a small population and the development of a textile mill, limiting the peasantry's need to commute great distances for employment. Also, Baja's proximity to the Yugoslav border would have meant peasants had a greater opportunity of escaping Hungary. In a town such as Kőszeg, in Vas County, the level of isolation would have improved a peasant's chances to speak and act freely, especially if the Party bureaucracy developed a sense of community with the population. A small population may have meant that meeting delivery quotas was much harder but the

[285] SF No. 152

degree of informal assistance and reciprocity between the peasants would have been much greater than in the rest of the country.

For the peasant youth, living near an urban centre usually meant leaving the family unit in search of industrial work, both for financial benefits and to escape the hardships of agricultural life. The chances of interacting with the opposite sex would have materialized at a much earlier period in their adolescence, and relationships outside of wedlock would have occurred with greater openness and transparency. With the ability of the parents to influence their children's decisions and actions diminished by economic necessity and State interference, the youth had to face the hardships of life without the benefit of a tight-knit social community to assist them in the more trying times. As was the case with the residents of a town such as Kőszeg, isolation would have generated a higher probability of the youth remaining within the community and being influenced much more by their parents and have been raised in accordance with traditional values.

Financial success seems to have been the guiding factor in how the life of the peasant unfolded during the early stages of the command economy. If a peasant was financially stable prior to the Communist takeover, he was most likely branded a kulak, usually by the State but in some rare cases on account of a personal vendetta from a disgruntled neighbour or the desires of a local Party official. Otherwise, the peasant lost the majority of his accumulated wealth in meeting delivery quotas and ascribing to peace loans. If a peasant became marginally self-sufficient under the regime, it was either because he joined the Party apparatus, performed black work, engaged in selling goods on the black market, or was in a co-operative farm such as the Noble Grape, where the local apparatus and cooperative farming system worked to the benefit of the population. If this was the case, the need to fragment the family into units of wage-earners was lessened and a higher degree of autonomy in the family life could be achieved. However, the need for the family

to form a cohesive economic and morally supportive unit was never completely absent in any of the villages, regardless of the level of prosperity.

In the broader picture, the peasantry survived the first wave of economic reforms and attempts at social engineering, being rather diminished in population and with a modified (and sometimes altogether new) attitude towards several traditionally held views. However, the perpetuation of the pre-Soviet peasant as a distinct class, representative of a way of life formed over the course of 200 years, appeared quite different once Sovietization was implemented in Hungary. While he still retained a strong tie to his land, land usually now meant the small plot he was permitted to cultivate for personal use. Politics remained as inaccessible as before, if not more so if the peasant was ideologically steadfast in his opposition to the State. The family unit itself became integral to the economic state of the household, replacing tradition and patriarchal roles with financial necessity. While most of these changes can be interpreted as a rapid program of liberalization that had begun prior to the arrival of the one-party State, there is no denying that the lack of a social cheques and balances accelerated this process, creating excesses in moral depravity, reconstituted social values, and challenged the sacrosanct status of the family unit.

The specificity of the Hungarian case illustrated throughout this study is indicative of the unique relationship that developed between the populations reorganized under the Soviet-style command economy to their past traditions. As a number of the countries in East and Central Europe experienced industrialization and liberalization at different points in their development, the extent of social reorganization varied as well. When certain reforms met with certain levels of success, so too did the respective populations react differently, forced to adapt, protect, and in some cases abandon, certain traditional characters. In other countries, such as Poland and Yugoslavia, where collectivization was incomplete or followed a different scheme, the social implications varied. In other countries

such as Albania or Romania, where collectivization was complete, there remained no room for such deviant elements such as small landholders or middle peasants to attempt to live outside the command economy, drastically impacting that economic stratum from perpetuating its values and way of life through later generations.

While the majority of peasant studies had been limited by the accessibility of the Soviet-controlled countries to academics, resources such as the CURPH collection provide a powerful tool in preserving and reconstructing events, conditions, and trends particular to their time period. While continuities and lasting trends can be measured by observing a number of small epochs in a country's historical timeline, such approaches rely heavily upon evidence garnered from populations that have survived and remained in the location they are studied, omitting the experiences of those who have since migrated or been transferred to other locations. Although oral history, and documents created through similar methods, have become more widely accepted in recent historical methods, it still remains to become as mainstream as official documents, often neglecting a degree of the human element in historical writings. Just as the archival records available after the fall of Communism diminished previous uncertainties within the political and socio-economic spheres, the CURPH Subject Files assist in correcting the previous interpretations of the social impact of economic policy changes at a defining moment for Hungary in the 20th century.

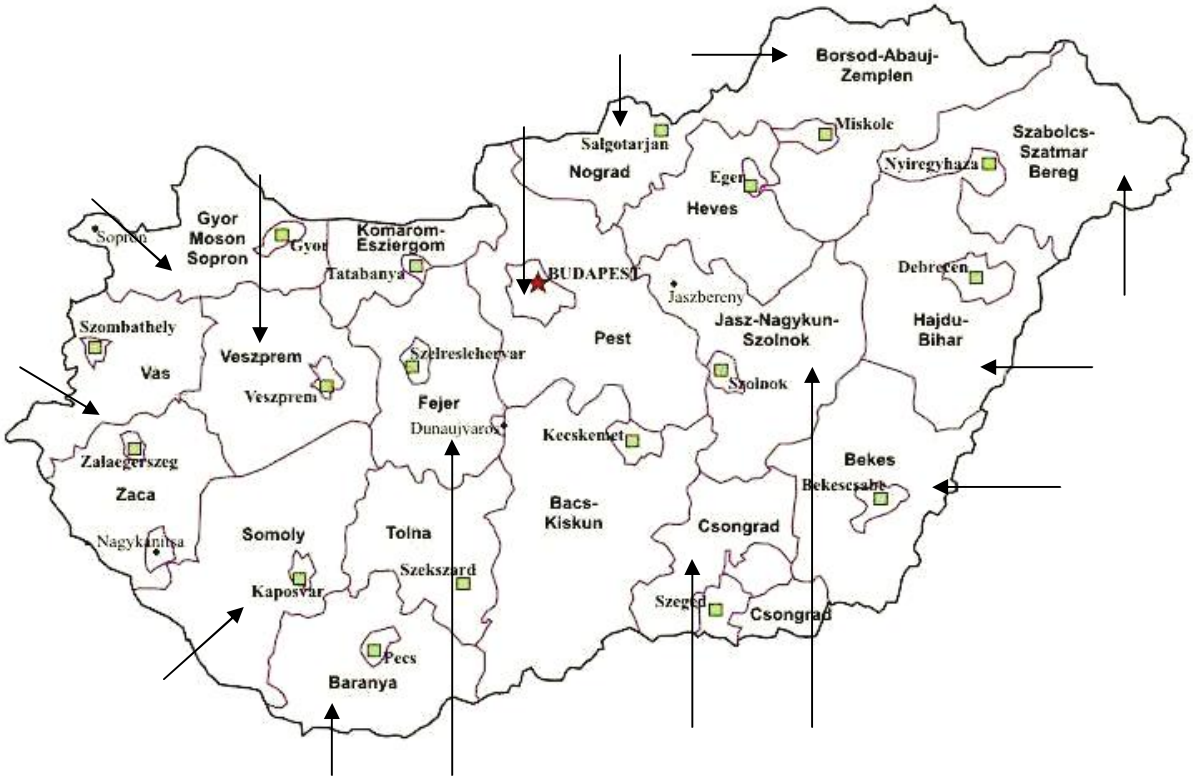
This study brings attention to the under-representation of the peasantry in most of the existing historical literature. While studies related to the peasantry are available in great quantities, it is consistently devoted to interpreting economic development, political or social oppression such as dekulakization, or analyzing trends in agricultural regions. There are but a few studies that truly attempt to study the peasantry in order to understand the human condition. In a part of the world that had been overwhelmingly peasant in character

over the last several centuries, it is strange that more attention has not been directed towards a social class that represented, in many cases, over 80 percent of the population.

The new turn in history has successfully challenged older models such as modernism, and brought history about-face into the cultural turn. While devaluating such fields of historical study as political or economic history would be as much a detriment to the discipline as maintaining such out-dated concepts as positivism, it is also to the detriment of the discipline to allow such sources of historical information regarding the first-hand experiences of individuals to remain extra-historical on account of concerns pertaining to bias and accuracy. After all, determining the validity and accuracy of evidence as historical fact, regardless of its status as an official or unofficial source of information, must first pass a factual litmus test. It is as much the duty of the historian to ensure that facts pass a litmus test as it is their duty to utilize all the available sources of information. The CURPH collection is undeniably a rich source of information that has yet to be plundered by the academic community. It is my hope that this study brings into view not only the potentials of this collection, and its ability to shed light on a formidable and perplexing period in Hungary's history, but also on the need to include discussion on the human condition in every aspect of historical research.

Appendix: Residences of CURPH Interviewees

Place of origin – Figure 1[286]



Baranya: 2; **Békés:** 1**; Borsod-Abaúj-Zemplén**: 2; **Budapest**: 3; **Csongrád**: 1; **Fejér**: 2; **Győr-Moson-Sopron**: 3; **Hajdú-Bihar**: 1; **Jász-Nagykun-Szolnok**: 2; **Nógrád**: 1; **Somoly**: 1; **Szabolc- Szatmár Bereg**: 3; **Vas**: 6; **Veszprém**: 1; **Other** (Romania): 1

[286] The map of Hungary in the appendix is the exclusive property of *Maps of World*, and all copyright privileges are the sole property of Compare Infobase Limited, 2006. Accessible at <http://www.mapsofworld.com/hungary/hungary-political-map.html> (accessed on 12 March 2007).

Major Residence – Figure 2[287]

Baranya: 1; **Budapest**: 7; **Borsod-Abaúj-Zemplén**: 2; **Győr-Moson-Sopron**: 3; **Hajdú-Bihar**: 2; **Somoly**: 1; **Vas**: 2; **Other**: 11 (rural: 7; other urban: 2; N/A: 2)

[287] See previous footnote.

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