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Original scientific paper

Land Reform, Collectivization, Hungarians and South Slavs in the Baja Triangle (1945–1956)¹

The years following the Second World War brought dramatic changes in the economic and social situation of the Hungarian peasantry. The radical land distribution was followed by the Sovietization of agriculture and the first waves of collectivization, which caused a real crisis in the countryside. In this paper, I will analyse the land distribution and collectivization process in the ethnically mixed villages of a small region along the Hungarian-Yugoslav border. I will focus on the local South Slavic minority and its attitude to land distribution and collectivization. The archival sources also seem to indicate that during land distribution the South Slavs found themselves in a privileged position in the Baja Triangle. Moreover, social tensions were sometimes mixed with an ethnic dimension, too. The examination of the above questions is also justified by the fact that on the other side of the border, in Yugoslavia, an opposite process began in the 1950s, which could provide the locals with an opportunity for comparison.

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KEYWORDS:

land distribution, collectivization in Eastern Europe, South Slavic minorities in Hungary, Hungarian-Yugoslav relations

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The years following the Second World War brought dramatic changes in the economic and social situation of the Hungarian peasantry. The radical land distribution was followed by the Sovietization of agriculture and the first two waves of collectivization, which caused a real crisis in the countryside. These processes had a profound impact on the lives of the ethnic minorities, too. While the displaced Germans lost their landholdings, the South Slavs, who were mostly rural and of peasant status, were among the beneficiaries of land distribution. The land they had acquired was thus threatened by the collectivization of agriculture. The attitude of the South Slav minority is also worth closer examination because the first wave of collectivization coincided with a dramatic deterioration in Hungarian–Yugoslav relations in 1948. As a result of the estrangement between the two countries, the South Slavs in Hungary were regarded by the political leadership as an enemy, as ‘Tito’s fifth column’. This may also have had an impact on their attitude to the socialist transformation of agriculture – while in Yugoslavia in the early 1950s, the opposite was happening and peasants were allowed to leave the cooperatives.

This study analyses South Slavs’ attitude toward land reform and the first phase of collectivization in the so-called Baja Triangle (*Bajski trokut*), a micro-region on the Hungarian side of the Hungarian–Yugoslav border. In addition to the border character of the region, this research is also justified by the fact that South Slav minorities in Hungary lived in one of the largest numbers here and after the Second World War they came to positions of power at the local level in several villages.

The conclusions are based on the state security documents kept in the Historical former State Security Organizations’ Archives (*Állambiztonsági Szolgálatok Történelmi Levéltára, ÁBTL*, Budapest). This research was greatly aided by the fact that the so-called object files (*objektum dossziék*), opened in the early 1950s for the villages of the Baja Triangle, have survived almost intact, thus offering insights into local conditions at the time, the problems caused by economic and social transformation, ethnic tensions, and cross-border activities (e. g. smuggling of goods and people, propaganda and espionage). The reports of mood (*hangulatjelentések*) and summaries of the local agents and informants provide us with an insight into the everyday lives, activities, fears, and hopes of a certain minority community in an ethnically mixed border region. However, the state security documents constitute a special group of sources. In many cases, the files and reports of the informants and secret agents were often subject to pressure from their officers and had a desire for ideological identification with the regime, which led to distortions of reality or emphasis. The documents could also reflect the expectations coming from the superiors of the state security apparatus.²

² György Gyarmati, “Nem mind arany, ami... A szocialista rendszer állambiztonsági iratainak történelmi forrásértéke,” in *Rendszerváltás és Kádár-korszak*, ed. György Majtényi and Gabriella Szabó (Budapest: ÁBTL–Kossuth Kiadó, 2008), 127–39, György Gyarmati, *Kísértő közelmúlt avagy a rendszerátalakítás egyik deficitje*. (Budapest: Állambiztonsági Szolgálatok Történelmi Levéltára – L’Harmattan, 2011), and György Gyarmati, “Mire jók az állambiztonsági ügynökiratok és mire nem?,” *Kommentár* 7, no. 6 (2012): 64–78.

Because of the documents' specific nature, the papers of the Baja and Bácsalmás district committees of the Hungarian Workers' Party (*Magyar Dolgozók Pártja, MDP*) were also consulted. At the meetings of the district committees, certain aspects of the South Slavic question were discussed several times as a separate agenda item. Although the ideological persuasion of the South Slav minority, their under-representation within the party, and their educational and cultural opportunities were mostly dealt with, the link between collectivization and the South Slav question was also touched upon in some cases. Also useful were the documents of the Agitation and Propaganda Department of the Central Committee of MDP, which dealt with the loyalty of the South Slav minority in Hungary, the extent to which the top-down socio-economic transformation had been achieved among them, and in this context, the propaganda tasks the party had to carry out. Although a large part of the documents can be considered "propaganda of success," some were surprisingly critical, mentioning the shortcomings and failings, too.

The context: South Slavs in Hungary and the Baja Triangle

With the break-up of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy and the Treaty of Trianon, Hungary changed from a multi-ethnic society to a nation-state. According to the 1920 census, Hungarians made up 89.56% of the population, while minorities in the country accounted for only 10.44%. Their share declined further over ten years, to just 7.92% in the 1930 census. Of these, 27,683 were Croats, 7,031 Serbs, and 20,564 Bunjevci and Šokci, totaling 0.64% of the population. (The Slovenian minority was not treated as a separate category in the census but was included in the statistics under the heading of other minority groups.) The assimilation of the South Slavs continued, and in 1941 (within the present-day borders) only 21,395 people declared themselves Croats, 16,490 Šokci or Bunjevci, and 5,442 Serbs. As a result of the negative historical experience of the Second World War and the oppressive climate of the emerging one-party communist dictatorship, the first national census in 1949 recorded an all-time decline in the number of people identifying themselves as belonging to a nationality, including the number of South Slavs (20 423 Croats, 5,158 Serbs and 4,473 Slovenes, and the census no longer included the Bunjevi-Šokci category). Thus, the share of South Slavs in the total population dropped to 0.31%. Under Yugoslav pressure, the South Slavs in Hungary were censused separately in March 1946. Contemporary reports testify that they were afraid to confess their national identity. First, the census coincided with the expulsion of the local Swabians, based on the results of a similar census in 1941, and the population exchange between Hungary and Czechoslovakia. Second, it was widely believed that those who claimed to be of South Slavic nationality would be deported to Yugoslavia shortly. In the case of the Baja Triangle, for example, it was rumoured that they would be thrown across the border within eight hours, and in Gara, a former gendarme, who was in charge of the census, warned them: "The great powers are now watching you so make sure you think carefully about what you write [on the census paper]. If you say you are

Slavs, they will put you into Czechoslovakia (!)'.³ Unsurprisingly, in 169 out of 263 municipalities inhabited by South Slavs in Hungary, nobody dared declare as such. In the Baja Triangle, more precisely among the 98,005 inhabitants of the Baja and Bácsalmás districts, a total of 6,506 people, 6.6% of the population, declared themselves to be Bunjevci and to a lesser extent Serbs, Croats, or Slovenes, while only 3,664 South Slavs (3.7%) were recorded by nationality.⁴ Without knowing the exact number of South Slavs, their actual number was estimated by the various ministries and the MDP leadership at around 100,000 in the mid-1950s, of which 25-30,000 lived in and in the villages around Baja.⁵

The vast majority of the South Slavs lived in villages, engaged in agriculture, farming and animal husbandry, and the proportion of the agrarian population was very high among the Bunjevci in particular. At the turn of the 1940s and 1950s, 15% of the South Slavs were landless, 20% had land holdings of between 1 and 5 cadastral jugerums (*kataszteri hold*),⁶ 60 had land holdings of between 5 and 15 cadastral jugerum and only 5 were considered to be wealthy farmers (*kulaks*). It is therefore understandable that the land distribution after the Second World War and the subsequent collectivization campaigns were of particular importance to them.⁷

Regarding their geographic location, South Slavs did not form a large coherent block anywhere in Hungary. Although the vast majority lived along the southern border of the country, Serbs could be found along the Danube River as far north as Szentendre (Sentandreja, north of Budapest), and Croatian communities could be found in the north-western county of Győr-Moson-Sopron. Concerning the total population, the largest proportion of Croats was found in the southern part of nowadays Bács-Kiskun county, in the former Bács-Bodrog county, including the districts of Baja (11.2% of the local population) and Bácsalmás (7.7%) and the city of Baja (3.3%) – the so-called Baja Triangle.⁸

The Baja Triangle, the 1245 km² area of the Bács-Bodrog county left for Hungary after the First World War, roughly covers a triangle-shaped territory between Baja in Hungary, the river Danube and the Hungarian-

³ MNL OL X 10872-12488 X 4831. IV-115. Jelentés a magyar-jugoszláv bizottság 1946. márc. 29-30-ig Baján, a bajai háromszögben és Mohácson végzett kiszállásának eredményeiről. II. melléklet, undated.

⁴ MNL BKML IV.401/a 1. d. 7/1946.biz. Az 1946-os népszámlálás adatai, undated.

⁵ Ágnes Tóth, "A „nagypolitika” erőterében. Délszlávok Magyarországon, 1945-1948," in *Magyarok és szerbek a változó határ két oldalán, 1941-1948. Történelem és emlékezet*, ed. Árpád Hornyák and László Bíró (Budapest: MTA BTK Történettudományi Intézet, 2016), 339-42., Ágnes Tóth, "Adatok az 1946-os magyarországi délszláv összeírás történetéhez," *Bács-Kiskun megye múltjából* 14, no. 1 (1998): 309; MNL OL XIX-J-1-j-Jugoszlávia-16/c-002349/1956. (25. d.), Bizalmas információ, February 6, 1956.; MNL OL XIX-J-4-a. (23. d.), 61-69, Jelentés, August 22, 1956.; MNL OL M-KS 276. f. 66. cs. 40. ó. e., Feljegyzés, August 24, 1956.

⁶ Jugerum (*hold* in Hungarian) was the official unit of territory in the country. Cadastral jugerum was introduced in 1875 and was counted as 5755 square meters or 0,755 hectares.

⁷ MNL OL M-KS 276. f. 89. cs. 186. ó. e., 213-15, Jelentés, undated.

⁸ Ágnes Tóth, "A „nagypolitika” erőterében," 341. For the earlier history of the Bunjevci and Šokci minorities of the region see Robert Skenderović, *Povijest podunavskih Hrvata (Bunjevaca i Šokaca) od doseljavanja do propasti Austro-Ugarske Monarhije* (Subotica: Zavod za kulturu vojvodanskih Hrvata, 2017).

Serbian border north of Subotica and Sombor. The area had been inhabited for centuries by a mixture of Hungarians, Croatians (Šokci and Bunjevci), and Germans (Swabians), with 73,241 Hungarians (68.8%), 27,888 Germans (25.4%) and 8,120 Southern Slavs (7.8%) out of a total population of 109 621 according to the 1940 census.⁹ After the Second World War, the German minority was forced to depart from the region. They were replaced by Hungarians who had fled or had been expelled from Yugoslavia (Szeklers) or by Hungarians who had been resettled in Hungary as the result of the Czechoslovak-Hungarian population exchange, but there was also resettlement from other parts of Hungary (mainly from Békés county).¹⁰ As a result of these processes, the South Slavs became the most significant ethnic minority group, playing a decisive role, exceeding their numerical ratio, in the history of the micro-region after 1945.

Although Yugoslavia made no formal territorial claim against Hungary at the Paris Peace Conference in 1947, the issue of border changes was raised several times after 1945 in the various and often contradictory Yugoslav ministerial and intellectual proposals.¹¹ As early as the autumn of 1944, Yugoslavia launched a propaganda campaign among the South Slavs in Hungary, especially among the Šokci and Bunjevci living in the Baja Triangle, to imagine their future in Titoist Yugoslavia. The Yugoslav armed forces challenged the Hungarian authority near the Hungarian-Yugoslav border and from November 1944 to March 1945 Yugoslav troops invaded the villages around Baja, establishing their administration in Gara, Csávoly (Čavolj) and Hercegszántó (Santovo), among others. Armed forces (militias) were also organised, partly by Yugoslav partisans and partly by local South Slavs. The occupying Yugoslav forces disarmed the local gendarmerie, and the Hungarian troops stationed in the villages, obstructed the Hungarian postal service, and made it difficult for the Hungarian administration to operate.¹² The majority of the local South Slav population, understandably, supported the Yugoslav aims. Tito was popular among them, and they could not resist the influence of Yugoslav propaganda. Several people collected signatures demanding the annexation of the region to Yugoslavia – such actions took place in Bácsbokod (Bikić), Csávoly, Gara, and Felsőszentiván (Gornji Sveti

⁹ MNL OL XIX-A-1-n-9/c-A bajai háromszög (5. d.), undated.

¹⁰ ÁBTL 3.1.5. 0-9556/2, III. rész, 15, Gara község államvédelmi operatív jellemzése, January 3, 1955. For the resettlements to Baja Triangle after 1945 see: Ágnes Tóth, *Telepítések Magyarországon 1945-1948 között* (Kecskemét: Bács-Kiskun Megyei Önkormányzat Levéltára, 1993).

¹¹ For the Yugoslav pressure and the various Yugoslav proposals prior to the peace conference: Petar Bagarić, "The Croatian Contribution to Plans for Revision of the Yugoslav-Hungarian Border in 1945-1946," *Review of Croatian History* 8, no. 1 (2012): 151-82, Árpád Hornyák, "Határkérdés és kisebbségek a második világháborút követő magyar-jugoszláv államközi kapcsolatokban, 1944-1946," *Kisebbségkutatás* 24, no.2 (2015): 142-58, Hornyák Árpád, "Határkijelölés, határsáv és a magyarországi délszlávok. Vitás kérdések a magyar-jugoszláv kapcsolatokban a második világháború után," in *Magyarok és szerbek a változó határ két oldalán, 1941-1948. Történelem és emlékezet*, ed. Hornyák Árpád and Bíró László (Budapest: MTA BTK Történettudományi Intézet, 2016), 315-35.

¹² ÁBTL 3.1.5. 0-9553/1, 181, Jelentés, September 5, 1952, ÁBTL 3.1.5. 0-9553/2, 74, Jelentés, August 22, 1948, Mária Fehér. "A Bács-Bodrog megyei délszlávok alsófokú oktatásának történetéhez," *Bács-Kiskun megye múltjából*, 5. no. 1 (1983): 542-43.

Ivan) – and a delegation, led by Antun Karagity, personally asked Tito in January 1945 to annex the Baja Triangle to Yugoslavia.¹³ Although this did not take place, the Yugoslavs tabled the question of the border change until March 1946, when Tito informed the Soviets in his last personal meeting with Stalin (27–28 May 1946) that Yugoslavia would not raise the territorial issue at the peace conference.¹⁴

Still, the Yugoslav communist leadership continued to monitor the situation of the South Slavs living in the Baja Triangle (especially their educational opportunities), and its improvement was seen as a precondition for the normalisation of relations between the two countries. In the spring of 1946, a Hungarian-Yugoslav joint committee was set up to investigate the conditions of the South Slavs living in the Baja Triangle and the area around Mohács (Mohač).¹⁵

Yugoslav pressure and improved bilateral relations at the local level significantly increased the room for *manoeuvre* of the South Slavs at that time. They were able to play a decisive role in the local bodies of the Hungarian Communist Party (Magyar Kommunista Párt, MKP) and the councils of the municipalities, and they also benefited from land distribution. However, the deterioration of Soviet-Yugoslav relations¹⁶ in the spring of 1948 led to a complete turnaround in Hungarian-Yugoslav bilateral relations and, consequentially, in the situation of the South Slav minority in Hungary. As a first sign of the changed position towards Yugoslavia, the MKP immediately put pressure on the South Slav minority organisations, and their leaders were expected by the authorities to publicly denounce Tito and repudiate the policies of the Yugoslav Communist Party. Some local branches of the Democratic Alliance of the South Slavs in Hungary (Magyarországi Délszlávok Demokratikus Szövetsége, MDDSZ), especially in Gara and Bácsalmás (Aljmaš), initially openly supported Tito, but quickly became politically passive after this effort had failed. Moreover, the deterioration of Hungarian-Yugoslav relations had a profound impact on the daily lives of the South Slavs living in the Baja Triangle. They lost their former privileged position and increasingly became considered Yugoslavia's 'fifth column.' This intensified

¹³ ÁBTL 3.1.5. O-9553, 38, Jelentés, June 21, 1949., ÁBTL 3.1.5. O-9553/2, 74, Jelentés, August 22, 1948., A. Enikő Sajti, "Tito 1947-es magyarországi látogatásának előzményei," in *A történettudomány szolgálatában. Tanulmányok a 70 éves Gecsényi Lajos tiszteletére*, ed. Magdolna Baráth and Antal Molnár (Budapest–Győr: Magyar Országos Levéltár, 2012), 590–91.

¹⁴ *Európa kettészakítása és a kétpólusú nemzetközi rend születése (1945–1949)*, ed. Géza Mezei (Budapest: Új Mandátum, 2001), 175–78.

¹⁵ Tóth, "A „nagypolitika” eréteében," 336–39.

¹⁶ For a good summary on the causes of the Soviet-Yugoslav conflict: Leonid Gibianski, "The 1948 Soviet-Yugoslav Conflict and the Formation of the 'Socialist Camp' Model," in *The Soviet Union in Eastern Europe, 1945–89*, ed. Odd Arne Westad, Sven G. Holtsmark, and Iver B. Neumann (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 1994.), 26–46., Svetozar Rajak, "The Cold War in the Balkans, 1945–1956," in *History of the Cold War*, vol. I, ed. Melvin P. Leffler and Odd Arne Westad (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 198–220. For its impact on Hungarian-Yugoslav relations: Péter Vukman, "Barátból ellenség – ellenségből barát (?): A magyar-jugoszláv párt- és államközi kapcsolatok (1945–1956)," in *Fejezetek a titói Jugoszlávia korai szakaszából* ed. Molnár Tibor (Zenta: VMMI, 2016), 45–79, Péter Vukman, "„A fordulat éveit”. Magyar-jugoszláv kapcsolatok (1948–1949)," *Acta Historica Szegediensis* 141, no. 1. (2017): 179–94.

the efforts of the State Protection Authority (Államvédelmi Hatóság, ÁVH) to monitor them, which further increased the climate of fear among the South Slavs. The expulsions from the border area also posed an existential threat. The Secretariat of the MDP decided on 18 January 1950 to create a 15 km-wide border zone at the Hungarian-Yugoslav border, which included the villages of the Baja Triangle, too. From 1 July onwards, special permits were required for entering the region, and permanent residents were issued special permanent residence permits. The ÁVH had drawn up a proposal for the deportation of 'class-unfriendly, hostile social groups' living in the border zone, too, including dual landowners (who owned land not only in Hungary but in Yugoslavia, too), those who had resettled from Yugoslavia after 1945, people of South Slavic origin, South Slavic teachers, Greek Orthodox priests and people with family or friends in Yugoslavia.¹⁷ Although this did not affect the masses of South Slavs, it was an excellent way of instilling fear among them.¹⁸ The deterioration of bilateral Hungarian-Yugoslav relations, the anti-clerical campaign, and the first wave of collectivization dramatically impacted their daily lives.

Land distribution and the South Slavs of the Baja Triangle

After the Second World War, the most radical land redistribution in Central Europe, apart from Poland, took place in Hungary, where a significant area of large estates still existed. The democratic parties that entered into coalition at the end of the war agreed on the need for land reform but differed in the form and extent of it: the Independent Smallholders' Party (*Független Kisgazdapárt, FKGP*) focused on establishing and strengthening the holdings of the small- and middle landowners, while the National Peasant Party (*Nemzeti Parasztpárt, NPP*) and the MKP called for a much more radical and broader land distribution. Fighting was still in full swing in the west of the country when the Provisional National Government adopted Decree No. 600/1945 M.E. on 15 March 1945, which affected nearly 35% of the country's arable land. The date of its adoption was symbolic, intended to mark the outbreak of the 1848 Revolution and the abolition of serfdom. As a result of the land distribution, the proportion of landless groups among the peasantry fell from 46% in 1941 to 17%, and the share of the small landowner category rose from 47% to 80%. The new owners received an average of 2.93 hectares (5.1 cadastral jugerum), which greatly increased the number of those belonging to the smallholder category of the peasantry. Even so, the amount of land available for allocation proved to be small, with almost half of the agrarian proletariat not having a plot of land of their own.¹⁹

¹⁷ István Orgoványi, "A déli határsáv 1948 és 1956 között," *Bács-Kiskun megye múltjából* 17, no. 1 (2001): 256-64.

¹⁸ Hornyák, "Határkijelölés, határsáv és a magyarországi délszlávok," 334.

¹⁹ Varga Zsuzsanna, *A magyar parasztság esete a szovjet kolhozokkal. Átalakuló életvilágok falun az ötvenes-hatvanas években* (Budapest: L'Harmattan, 2021), 11-12., György Gyarmati, *A Rákosi-korszak. Rendszerváltó fordulatok éve Magyarországon, 1945-1956* (Budapest: ÁBTL - Rubicon, 2011), 50-54. For a comparative approach of the Hungarian land reform: Nigel Swain, and Zsuzsanna Varga, "Postwar land reforms in comparative perspective," *Öt kontinens* 10, no. 1 (2012): 141-57.

In Bács-Bodrog county, a total of 111,366 cadastral jugerums of land was included in the land distribution, which affected 36.7% of the total area (slightly more than the national average of 34.6%).²⁰ In the Baja Triangle, many local South Slavs were allocated land between 5 and 10 cadastral jugerum (more than the nationwide average of 5.1 jugerum). There were also some large landowners among them, each owning between 40-80 cadastral jugerum of land. Antun Karagity, the Šokci amateur writer from Gara who agitated for the annexation of the Baja Triangle to Yugoslavia, owned 96 cadastral jugerums, and Antal Zomborcsevic had more than 200 cadastral jugerums of land in Gara and Bácsborsód (Boršot), employing 5-6 families as hired labourers.²¹ In Gara and Vaskút, the land confiscated from the German minority was first and foremost allocated to the Bunjevci.²² It also happened that members of the South Slavic minority benefited from the land distribution not only the based on need, but also because they had served as partisans in the Yugoslav (i.e. another country's!) army at the end of the world war. Indeed, many of the local young South Slavs became partisans, partly because of Tito's prestige, but also to avoid being conscripted into the newly reorganised Hungarian army. Stjepan Velin identified 98 partisans by name, most from Gara (43) and Hercegszántó (30). Others joined the Yugoslav army from Katymár, Bácsalmás and Csávoly. Of these, 64 benefited from land distribution in this capacity, too, and almost all of them received 10-12 cadastral jugerum of land.²³

It would be interesting to know whether there was a correlation between land distribution and sympathy for the MKP among local South Slavs, and if so, how much. It is certain that while the vast majority of the Hungarian peasants in the Baja Triangle supported the FKGP, the masses of South Slavs favoured the MKP, especially in Gara and in Hercegszántó.²⁴ Whether this was solely because Tito and the Yugoslav partisans enjoyed great prestige among them, or whether it was also because the MKP was the most vocal in demanding that as much land be distributed and as quickly as possible. Ágnes Tóth assumes that the South Slavs living in the mixed-population villages of the Baja Triangle also tried to gain a decisive influence during the process of land distribution by previously joining the MKP.²⁵

²⁰ László Király, "A mezőgazdaság amerikai utas fejlődése és a népi demokratikus agrárátalakulás Bács-Kiskun megyében" (Candidate thesis, Kecskemét, 1976), 199. Accessed January 22, 2023. <https://mek.oszk.hu/23500/23588/>

²¹ ÁBTL 3.1.5. O-9556, 292, Jelentés, September 20, 1949, ÁBTL 3.1.5. O-9556/1, 104, Jelentés, December 2, 1952.

²² Fehér Mária, "A Bács-Bodrog megyei délszlávok alsófokú oktatásának történetéhez," *Bács-Kiskun megye múltjából* 5, no. 1 (1983): 545.

²³ Stjepan Velin, "I oni su dali svoj udio... Bački Bunjevci, Šokci i Srbi u NOV Jugoslavije," in *Iz naše prošlosti. (Studije)*, ed. Mišo Mandić and Marin Mandić, (Budimpešta: Poduzeće za Izdavanje udžbenika, 1979), 60-3, 72-5.

²⁴ For the history of the South Slavs in Gara and Hercegszántó at this period in English: Péter Vukman, "Border, identity, everyday life. The South Slavs of Gara in state security documents (1945-1956)," *Études sur la région méditerranéenne - Méditerrané Tanulmányok* 33, Numéro spécial (2023): 251-64., Péter Vukman, "Living in the Vicinity of the Yugoslav-Hungarian border (1945-1960): Breaks and Continuities. A Case Study of Hercegszántó (Santovo)," *History in Flux* 2, no. 1 (2020): 9-27, <http://doi.org/10.32728/flux.2020.2.1>.

²⁵ Ágnes Tóth, "Népmozgások Csonka Bács-Bodrog vármegyében (1945-1948)," *Barátság* 3, no. 1 (1996): 1227.

A significant part of the land allocated to the local South Slavs during the land distribution was previously owned by the Swabians who were displaced from the Baja Triangle. In several settlements, such as Gara, the South Slavs (and of course probably the ethnic Hungarians as well) wanted to acquire the movables and agricultural machinery of the displaced Swabians. It was almost impossible to reclaim these machines and tools from the South Slavs later on because they immediately created an ethnic dimension it: the authorities wanted to reclaim those pieces of machinery not because they were obtained illegally but because they were owned by the South Slavs and not the ethnic Hungarians.²⁶ A similar thing happened in August 1949 when the authorities sought to settle the ownership of illegally held state land. In Gara, this involved 900 cadastral jugerums, much of it acquired by local South Slavs. Many of them cultivated these lands with Swabians who had fled their village of Harka illegally to escape the forced expulsions.²⁷

The ethnic tensions that accompanied the land distribution were the most acute in Bácsalmás. Following multiple well-founded accusations against the chairman of the local land distribution committee (including several cases of fraud, robbery, theft, and extortion), the National Land Settlement Council (Országos Földbirtokrendező Tanács) dissolved the committee in February 1946. The decision was met with resistance by the members of the committee, who were mostly "chauvinist Bunjevci," who gathered with some of those who benefited from the land reform for a meeting at the local office of the MKP on 13 February. The dissolution of the committee was seen by the leadership, according to a report written to Minister of Justice István Ries, as "thwarting the realisation of Slavic goals" and statements were made against Hungarian settlers who should only be given land after the Southern Slavs had already received their share. If they did not get land, "they would have to be rounded up and handed over to Tito, and he would know what to do with them, the gallows from which they had escaped would be waiting for them." The crowd of about 150 Bunjevci then took to the streets, cheering "Živio Tito" ("Long live Tito"). Violence broke out. The demonstrators beat up the 61-year-old Hungarian settler József Olasz for no reason, the lawyer István Olasz, who, according to the demonstrators, defended the interests of the old landowners, causing serious arm and skull injuries, and they also assaulted the Reformed pastor's wife who gave birth to her child just a few days before. In all cases, the demonstrators ransacked homes, stole money and other valuables, and broke into the Reformed church building. Hearing the news, the Minister of Justice ordered an investigation, but the consequences are unknown. All that is known is that the MKP denied any involvement or role in the case or that the South Slavs had a decisive influence either in the land distribution, in the committee, or during the demonstration.²⁸

²⁶ ÁBTL 3.1.5. O-9556, 145, Jelentés, October 5, 1948., ÁBTL 3.1.5. O-9580, 68, Jelentés, November 5, 1948.

²⁷ ÁBTL 3.1.5. O-9556, 168, Jelentés, August 31, 1949., ÁBTL 3.1.5. O-9556, 141, Jelentés, September 18, 1948.

²⁸ MNL OL M-KS 274. f. 11. cs. 57. ő. e., Ries István igazságügyi miniszternek, March 13, 1946., MNL OL M-KS 274. f. 11. cs. 57. ő. e., Jegyzőkönyv, May 7, 1946.

Almost in parallel with the land distribution, Imre Nagy, Minister of Agriculture between 1944 and 1945, allowed the establishment of farmers' cooperatives on 14 September 1945. Various cooperatives, such as credit and dairy distribution cooperatives or the Hangya (Ant) Cooperatives, founded in 1898, had already existed in the Baja Triangle, too, but they were mainly concerned with the collection, purchase, and sale of goods. Following Imre Nagy's decree, farmers' cooperatives were also established, with 22 cooperatives in Bács-Kiskun County in 1945 and 60 new ones in 1946. At least two or three different cooperatives were operating in the villages of the Baja Triangle. In addition to the farmers' cooperatives, they were usually dairy distribution and credit cooperatives, such as in Hercegszántó, Vaskút (Baškut), Bácsszentgyörgy (Đurić), Gara or Csávoly, but, as in the rest of the country, they did little substantial work.²⁹ An ethnic dimension to their establishment was given by the general perception that in Gara and Hercegszántó the South Slavs were over-represented in their management.³⁰ Moreover, in Gara and Vaskút ethnic segregation can be observed: the Szekler settlers established a separate farmers' cooperative.³¹

The first wave of collectivization

The preparation for the sovietisation of agriculture, beyond the communist ideology's view of cooperative farming as a process of modernisation as opposed to the small peasant farms, which were considered a symbol of backwardness, was initiated by the communist parties of Central and Eastern Europe, including the MKP, in the second half of 1948, in the context of the Soviet–Yugoslav conflict and the consolidation of Soviet-style regimes in Central and Eastern Europe. However, not only the peasant masses but also a large part of the party membership of the MKP and its successor MDP had to be persuaded of the merits of collectivization. Mátyás Rákosi and the MKP's leadership thus for the first time set about the fight against the so-called *kulaks*, which also provided a spectacular demonstration of their dissociation from the peasant politics of the Communist Party of Yugoslavia. Rákosi's speech in Kecskemét on 20 August 1948 marked the beginning of the propaganda campaign against the rich peasantry and the start of the preparations for collectivization. The government decree of 29 August 1948 capped the land rent at 25 cadastral jugerum, the tenant's own and rented property together could not exceed 40 cadastral jugerums; land above this amount could be appropriated.³² Collectivization also meant that nearly 2.5

²⁹ ÁBTL 3.1.5. O-9553, 10, Jelentés, March 15, 1949., ÁBTL 3.1.5. O-9555, 14, March 15, 1949., ÁBTL 3.1.5. O-9557, 46, Jelentés, December 21, 1948., ÁBTL 3.1.5. O-9580, 15, Jelentés, March 15, 1949., ÁBTL 3.1.5. O-9556, 116, Jelentés, February 18, 1949., ÁBTL 3.1.5. O-9557, 58, Jelentés, May 19, 1949.

³⁰ ÁBTL 3.1.5. O-9553, 78, Jelentés, January 22, 1949., ÁBTL 3.1.5. O-9553, 89, Jelentés, June 24, 1949., ÁBTL 3.1.5. O-9556, 117, Jelentés, February 18, 1949.

³¹ ÁBTL 3.1.5. O-9556, 117. Jelentés, February 18, 1949., ÁBTL 3.1.5. O-9555, 48, Jelentés, January 29, 1949.

³² Varga, *A magyar parasztság*, 38–39. For a historical and theoretical summary of the collectivization and the centrally planned economy: Ivan T. Berend, *An Economic History of Twentieth-Century Europe. Economic Regimes from Laissez-Faire to Globalization* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 133–89. For the Cominform-initiated

million to 3 million land owners and their families were (to be) persuaded to give up their status as owners and their resistance broken by agitation.³³ In the case of the South Slavs, this also meant that the positive effect of land distribution on their social and economic status was eliminated by joining the cooperatives.³⁴

The collectivization of agriculture in the Baja Triangle started as early as the autumn of 1948, and during 1948–1949 various cooperative farms (*termelőszövetkezeti csoport, tszcs*) were formed. Collectivization was accompanied by an intense propaganda campaign and an increase in the peasants' obligations to compulsory deliveries, which proved almost unbearable, especially in 1952 (the year of the so-called 'loft sweep', in Hungarian: a *padlássöpítés éve*).³⁵

The agitation for joining the cooperative farms was strong among the South Slavs of the Baja Triangle. Their entry was particularly important to the authorities, as it demonstrated that the South Slavs in Hungary were firmly aligned with Rákosi and rejected the policies of Tito and the Yugoslav Communist leadership. If we look purely at the cooperative farms formed among the Southern Slavs, it seems that, by 1951–1952, the authorities had largely succeeded: some of the cooperatives formed in Vaskút, Katymár (Kačmar), Gara, Hercegszántó, Bácsalmás, Csikéria (Čikerija), Bácsszentgyörgy were 70–80% Southern Slavs.³⁶ However, if we look beyond the percentage figures, the picture is much more nuanced in terms of the actual number of people joining the cooperatives. In August 1950, for example, the MDP's Baja district committee considered it as a major success that ten South Slav families (!) had joined the cooperative farm in Gara.³⁷ Two years later, 70 of the 96 families in the local *Vörös Csillag* (Red Star) cooperative farm were South Slavs, 25 of the 70 families in the *Újbarázda* (New Plough) cooperative, and 10 of the 11 families in the *Új Élet* (New Life) cooperative farm.³⁸ In Bácsszentgyörgy only 12 South Slav families had joined the tszcs by the summer of 1950,³⁹ just as in Csikéria, but there the number had fallen to mere two families by the spring of 1953.⁴⁰ The majority of the local South Slavs thus stayed away and wanted to keep themselves away

collectivization: Geoffrey Swain and Nigel Swain, *Eastern Europe since 1945* (Houndmills: Macmillan, 1998) 2nd edition, 99–102.

³³ Gyarmati, *A Rákosi-korszak*, 190.

³⁴ Ágnes Tóth, *Németek Magyarországon 1950–1970* (Budapest: Társadalomtudományi Kutatóközpont – Argumentum Kiadó, 2020), 259.

³⁵ For a good summary of the reaction of the Hungarian peasantry to collectivisation see: Varga, *A magyar parasztság*, 54–61.

³⁶ MNL BKML XXXV. 38. f. 80. d. 1. cs. 3. ő.e., Jegyzőkönyv, May 24, 1951. MNL BKML XXXV.38. f. 80. d. 1. cs. 4. ő.e., Jelentés a délszlávok között végzett politikai munkáról, August 1, 1951., MNL BKML XXXV. 38. f. 80. d. 1. cs. 4. ő.e., Jelentés a délszlávok körében végzett politikai munkáról, September 12, 1951., MNL BKML XXXV. 39. f. 88. d. 1. cs. 4. ő.e., Jegyzőkönyv, June 7, 1951., MNL BKML XXXV. 39. f. 88. d. 1. cs. 6. ő.e., Jegyzőkönyv és Jelentés a délszlávok körében végzett politikai munkáról, May 21, 1952.

³⁷ MNL BKML XXXV. 38. f. 80. d. 1. cs. 3. ő.e., Jegyzőkönyv, August 16, 1950.

³⁸ MNL BKML XXXV. 38. f. 83. d. 2. cs. 18. ő. e., Jelentés, March 31, 1952.

³⁹ MNL OL 276. f. 89. cs.186. ő. e., Feljegyzés, August 21, 1950.

⁴⁰ MNL BKML XXXV. f. 39. f. 88. d. 2. cs. 2. ő. e., Jegyzőkönyv, June 4, 1950., MNL BKML XXXV. f. 39. f. 88. d. 1. cs. 8. ő. e., Jegyzőkönyv, May 4, 1953.

from the Communist-style reorganization of agriculture. Compared with other counties inhabited by South Slavs: In Zala county, all the South Slavic villages had already established at least one such farm in August 1950,⁴¹ in Baranya county, 17 of the 26 South Slavic villages had a cooperative farm by March 1951, and in Csongrád county, the South Slavs (Serbs) joined the cooperatives in full numbers in the three villages they inhabited (Szőreg, Deszk, Újszentiván).⁴²

In general (most of the relevant sources can be found for Hercegszántó, Gara, Vaskút, Bácsszentgyörgy, Bácsalmás and Katymár), the South Slavs of the Baja Triangle similarly reacted to collectivisation to the peasantry in other parts of the country. However, it is also true that within a given settlement, ethnicity and wealth also influence individual strategies. The passivity of peasants was observed in all settlements, regardless of ethnicity, among Hungarians, South Slavs, and the Szekler settlers.⁴³ In Gara, the South Slavs and the Szekler settlers were often agitating each other against the cooperative farms, and their moods were not free of anti-Semitic overtones. Some South Slavs blamed the Jews for the forced deliveries: "We have to deliver because the wheat we collect is being shipped to Palestine for the Jewish army."⁴⁴ Some also feared that the Yugoslavs would push Jews across the border *en masse*, all of whom would be placed in leading positions in Hungary. According to the ÁVH, the rumours were also spread by ethnic Hungarians who had been resettled to Gara from Czechoslovakia. According to others: "the harmful activities of the Jews in Yugoslavia were discovered and, consequently, the remaining Jews in Yugoslavia were thrown over to Hungary at Kelebija. In retaliation, the Hungarian authorities removed the picture of Tito from the locomotive of the Yugoslav train arriving there."⁴⁵

Although some of the South Slavs seemed to be enthusiastic about the cooperatives, even they made excuses: "They know that the cooperative is good, but what are going to happen to the elderly. That's the biggest obstacle [...] the old people don't want to join because they can't work, they can't bring the land with themselves. And if they leave the land and join [the cooperatives] without land, who is going to work on the land of the old people?" – they asked.⁴⁶ It can also be observed that some South Slavs joined cooperatives to get rid of the ever-increasing compulsory deliveries, taxes, and other agricultural burdens. There were also voices saying that if they had

⁴¹ MNL OL 276. f. 89. cs. 186. ó. e., MDP Zala megyei pártbizottság az MDP KV Agit. prop. osztályának, 24 August 24, 1950.

⁴² MNL OL 276. f. 89. cs. 186. ó. e., Baranya megyei pártbizottság az MDP KV Agitációs és propaganda osztályának, March 24, 1951., MNL OL 276. f. 89. cs. 186. ó. e., MDP Csongrád megyei pártbizottság az MDP KV Agit. prop. osztályának, March 30, 1951.

⁴³ ÁBTL 3.1.5. O-9555., 180, Jelentés, August 22, 1950, ÁBTL 3.1.5. O-9555, 183, Jelentés, August 27, 1950, ÁBTL 3.1.5. O-9553/1, 86, Jelentés, October 26, 1951, ÁBTL 3.1.5. O-9556, 175, Jelentés, September 27, 1949, ÁBTL 3.1.5. O-9556, 186, Gara, August 22, 1950., ÁBTL 3.1.5. O-9553/1, 159, Jelentés, April 4, 1951, MNL OL 276. f. 89. cs. 118. ó. e., Jelentés Bács-Kiskun, Baranya, Somogy és Zala határmenti területeinek agitációs munkájáról, undated., MNL BKML XXXV. 38. f. 83. d. 2. cs. 18. ó. e., Jelentés, March 31, 1952, MNL OL 276. f. 89. cs. 186. ó. e., Feljegyzés, September 18, 1951.

⁴⁴ ÁBTL 3.1.5. O-9556, 137, Jelentés, September 8, 1948.

⁴⁵ ÁBTL 3.1.5. O-9556, 143-144, Jelentés, September 29, 1948.

⁴⁶ ÁBTL 3.1.5. O-9553/1, 134. Jelentés, February 23, 1952.

to, they would rather enter the state-owned farms in the hope of a better living, or that they wanted to work in the industrial plants or the construction industry.⁴⁷ Many of those ethnic Hungarian settlers who had fled Yugoslavia at the end of the Second World War and lived in the district of Bácsalmás saw a way out in applying for Hungarian citizenship: they could move freely within the country then and could take up work anywhere.⁴⁸ Still, others (at least according to the local accusations preserved in state security documents) tried to get into leading positions within the cooperatives to create 'anti-cooperative sentiment' and 'agitate' against the cooperatives – among them South Slav large landowners.⁴⁹ There were even allegations that the South Slavs and the ethnic Hungarian settlers hired a few bossy South Slavs to infiltrate the cooperatives and disrupt them from within.⁵⁰

Despite the intensive propaganda campaign, the results of the first campaign of collective farming were far below expectations: in mid-1952, the cooperatives cultivated only 18% of the arable land in Hungary, and the share of state farms was only 10%.⁵¹ From July 1953 until the end of the year, as a result of a less oppressive agricultural policy of the new prime minister Imre Nagy, 40% of their members nationwide had made use of the option to leave.⁵² In the Bácsalmás district during this period (from October 1953 to February 1954), several state security reports stated that ethnic Hungarians who had resettled from Yugoslavia to Bácsalmás, Tataháza (Tataza), Mátételke (Matević) and Madaras (Madaraš) were agitating against the cooperatives and were trying to persuade their members to leave. They also allegedly carried out several acts of sabotage: machinery was damaged, cattle fell ill on one farm and pigs died in others.⁵³ Of course, there was a rational explanation for all this (for example, harsh weather conditions or lack of forage), but in such a tense situation, it was easy for the secret agents and informants to assume the 'enemy's intrigues' instead.

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Collectivization and the image of Yugoslavia

At the very time of the first wave of the Hungarian collectivization campaign, a process of the opposite kind began in Yugoslavia, allowing peasants to leave the cooperatives. Based on the quotes in the informants' reports for the ÁVH, a generally positive image of Yugoslavia can be observed in the Baja Triangle, especially between 1953 and 1956. It was mostly influenced not only by the fact that Hungary's southern neighbour stopped collectivization, but also by the collective trauma of the harsh compulsory deliveries of 1952 ('the year of the attic sweep'). It is also possible

⁴⁷ ÁBTL 3.1.5. 0-9957, 113, Jelentés, August 28, 1950, ÁBTL 3.1.5. 0-9555, 183, Jelentés, August 27, 1950, ÁBTL 3.1.5. 0-9528/1, 141, Jelentés, October 31, 1952.

⁴⁸ ÁBTL 3.1.5. 0-9528, 153, Jelentés, February 2, 1954, MNL OL 276/89/186. pp. 67-70. Jelentés, 1951. február 10. 1-4, 143-150.

⁴⁹ As for example in Bácsalmás: ÁBTL 3.1.5. 0-9528/1, 141, October 31, 1952.

⁵⁰ MNL OL 276. f. 89. cs. 186. ó.e. Feljegyzés, November 24, 1950.

⁵¹ Varga, *A magyar parasztság*, 53.

⁵² Varga, *A magyar parasztság*, 94.

⁵³ ÁBTL 3.1.5. 0-9528, 136, Jelentés, August 4, 1953, ÁBTL 3.1.5. 0-9528, 153, Jelentés, February 2, 1954, ÁBTL 3.1.5. 0-9528/1a, 429, Jelentés, July 2, 1953, ÁBTL 3.1.5. 0-9528/1a, 486, October 1, 1953.

that the anticipation generated by the measures of the reformist Imre Nagy government (1953–1955) and the less repressive nature of his ‘New Course’ made people more courageous in voicing their opinions to collectivization.

The more favourable situation in Yugoslavia had been mentioned in the informants’ reports since the early 1950s. In her shop in Hercegszántó, the wife of István Szabó, for example, was praising the quality of the Yugoslav goods: “these are goods from Belgrade, Zagreb, Croatia, good quality Serbian goods”.⁵⁴ In Csávolgy, in October 1951, the walls of the houses of several members of the local cooperative farm were scribbled with signs in favour of Tito and against the cooperatives. It is true that such inscriptions as “Long live Horthy, Zsivio Tito” or “Zsivio Tito, Heil Hitler” make one wonder whether the scribbler was aware of the nature of the Yugoslav regime, or he was simply making a general criticism of the Rákosi regime. But the meaning of the inscription “Death to the tszcs, phooey tszcs!” was perfectly clear to everyone.⁵⁵

Even if the ÁVH was primarily interested in anti-regime opinions, a general favourable tendency to Yugoslavia can be observed as agents and informants regularly reported on the positive Yugoslav image in nearly all municipalities (for example, Hercegszántó, Gara, Csávolgy, Csátalja, Bácsszentgyörgy, Bácsalmás), and not only among the local South Slavs, but also and mostly among the indigenous ethnic Hungarians, and those Hungarians who had resettled from Vojvodina or Czechoslovakia. In the reports of the ÁVH, it is repeatedly stated that there were no taxes or levies in Yugoslavia, people were not slaves there, and that the wages were enough to buy clothes, furniture, and, when they got married, to buy a dowry.⁵⁶ For example, István Illés, a hairdresser in Bácsalmás, said: “It is a system of exploitation [here]. In Yugoslavia you can have everything, here they can only collect taxes.”⁵⁷ Ethnic Hungarians in Csávolgy who had resettled from Czechoslovakia also praised Yugoslavia: “The Yugoslavs are smarter, because they restored the system of private farming a long time ago, we only just found out about it.”⁵⁸ In some cases, even MDP members and leaders of the cooperative farms agreed. For example, István Kusztor, from the Bácsszentgyörgy cooperative farm, said as early as 1951 that he would no longer go to work for the cooperative. He was not satisfied at all and he would feel much better in Yugoslavia.⁵⁹ A few months earlier, Mihály Gáspárovics, a member of the MDP in Csávolgy, who had benefited from the land distribution in 1945, had cried out during one of the agitation campaigns: “Democracy gave land to the working peasants and these gangsters and robber-barons are taking it away from the peasants. Tito’s country is the real communism,

⁵⁴ ÁBTL 3.1.5. O-9553/2, 60, Jelentés, July 28, 1950.

⁵⁵ ÁBTL 3.1.5. O-9580/a, 270, Jelentés, October 26, 1951.

⁵⁶ As for example in Csátalja: ÁBTL 3.1.5. O-9558, 243, Jelentés, November 16, 1953, ÁBTL 3.1.5. O-9558, 256, Jelentés, January 11, 1954, ÁBTL 3.1.5. O-9558/1, 100. Jelentés, November 11, 1954.

⁵⁷ ÁBTL 3.1.5. O-9528, 153, Jelentés, February 2, 1954.

⁵⁸ ÁBTL 3.1.5. O-9580/a, 356, Jelentés, September 14, 1953.

⁵⁹ ÁBTL 3.1.5. O-9557, 192, Jelentés, September 24, 1951.

Tito has given the land [to the peasants], and he is not taking it away [from them], he allows private property and let the people live free.”⁶⁰

The positive picture was common not only among the Southern Slavs but also among those who migrated from Yugoslavia and the indigenous ethnic Hungarians. For example, István Vélin, the headmaster of the South Slavic school in Hercegszántó, told the informant of the ÁVH in November 1955 that “in Yugoslavia the peasant only had to pay taxes, but no contributions. Everyone lives better there than in Hungary, the peasants are not deprived of their crops, they receive more material (financial) benefits, and they do not just bluster about the worker-peasant alliance as in Hungary”.⁶¹ Sándor Holosz, aged 48, who was born in Bezdan and lived in Csátalja since 1945, stated in October 1954: “what I have is not mine, but in Yugoslavia there is nothing like that. There, if somebody has something there, they don’t have to be afraid of it being taken away, either for taxes or for collection.”⁶² József Bogenyi, who moved from Yugoslavia to Csátalja after 1941, had a similar opinion: “it would be better in Yugoslavia now, there is no such obligation there and people don’t have to fear as they do here from the tax collectors.”⁶³ Pál Vida, aged 31, born in Temerin in South Bačka and living in Gara, expressed his opinion in July 1953: “Hey, brother, this is no life, man is miserable here, the only way to survive is to steal or cheat. But never mind, it’s not so long and it will end. If I just could go down to my father in Yugoslavia [...] My dad writes [...] that there is no kolkhoz or sovhoz there. They have a pretty life there. [Élnek mint hal a vízben.] He also writes to be patient, there is not much time left [for Communists in Hungary] as they are full of American soldiers, the airfield in Subotica is full of planes. God willing, they will come tomorrow.”⁶⁴

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Similar opinions can be found in the sources until as late as the summer of 1956. The 35-year-old Nándor Klein, for example, stated in June 1956, referring to Tito’s visit to the Soviet Union and the dismissal of Imre Nagy: “Tito is going to Moscow and when he comes back, very big changes will take place. Here in Hungary and in the other people’s democracies, too, and Rákosi will easily disappear, Imre Nagy will come back and the cooperatives will be replaced [by individual farming], and the cooperatives will be terminated.”⁶⁵

However, with the dismissal of Imre Nagy (on 18 April 1955), collectivization came to the fore again. In the second half of 1955, the number of collective farms nationwide increased by about 450, and the number of families joining them grew by 67 thousand. From the beginning of 1956, peasant resistance was again on the increase.⁶⁶ The process was temporarily halted again by the revolution that broke out that October, but in the 1960s the socialist transformation of agriculture in Hungary, including the villages of the Baja Triangle, was finally completed.

⁶⁰ ÁBTL 3.1.5. 0-9580, 206, Jelentés, February 10, 1951.

⁶¹ ÁBTL 3.1.5. 0-9553/3, 74, Jelentés, November 15, 1955.

⁶² ÁBTL 3.1.5. 0-9558/1, 96, Jelentés, October 28, 1954.

⁶³ ÁBTL 3.1.5. 0-9558/1, 96, Jelentés, October 28, 1954.

⁶⁴ ÁBTL 3.1.5. 0-9556/1, 234, Jelentés, July 15, 1953.

⁶⁵ ÁBTL 3.1.5. 0-9558/1, 275, Jelentés, June 7, 1956.

⁶⁶ Varga, *A magyar parasztság*, 96–97.

Conclusion

Due to its economic and social situation, the South Slavic minority in Hungary was a beneficiary of the land distribution after the Second World War. They received an average of 5-10 cadastral jugerum of land, above the national average of 5.1. The distribution of land in the Baja Triangle was often accompanied by ethnic conflicts, the most significant of which was the demonstration in Bácsalmás in February 1946. In many cases, the over-representation of Southern Slavs in the farmers' cooperatives could be observed.

The agitation accompanying the first wave of collectivization was strong among the South Slavs in the Baja Triangle as the authorities collectively considered these minorities as enemies, but also wanted to demonstrate that the South Slavs firmly supported Rákosi and the Hungarian Communist regime against Tito. Regardless, most of the South Slavs in the Baja Triangle wanted to resist the Communist-style reorganization of agriculture. Their strategies were similar to those that ethnic Hungarians used. The harshness of the collectivization campaign was accompanied by a positive image of Titoist Yugoslavia in the Baja Triangle, not only among the South Slavs but also the ethnic Hungarians, too. However, their hope that the collectivization would end, and it would be followed by similar processes that took place in Yugoslavia remained unfounded.

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