

Zsuzsanna VARGA

MODEL-TRANSFERS IN THE HUNGARIAN AGRICULTURE AFTER THE SECOND WORLD WAR

It was not just ideologies and weapons that played important roles in the competition between the two global systems of socialism and capitalism, so too did consumer goods; and in this domain, the countries of the socialist bloc struggled with serious deficiencies throughout. The economics of shortage revealed itself most dramatically precisely in the supply of basic foodstuffs, as is revealed by the fact that the Soviet Union was forced in the 1970s to use some of its gold reserves to finance food imports. For example, food shortages were a near permanent problem in Romania during the *Ceaușescu* era, while in Poland not only meat, flour, but also many other basic food products were being rationed as late as the beginning of the 1980s.(1)



Western technology in the socialist agriculture (Source: Collection of Zsuzsanna Varga)

Food shortages, rationing and queuing were commonplace in Hungary too, which was compelled to import bread grains and meat until the middle of the 1960s. However, by the 1970s a fundamental change had taken place as a result of technology and know-how transfer from the West: domestic food supplies became stable and Hungarian agricultural exports began to grow, both to Eastern and Western markets. According to statistics from the United Nations Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO), Hungary's agricultural output was unrivaled within the socialist bloc. It was no accident that the Western press began to refer to the "*Hungarian agricultural miracle*". Yet, during this period, Hungary's government always denied the existence of a unique Hungarian model, because it did not want to get into an ideological conflict with the principle of Soviet agricultural superiority. Works on agricultural history written during the socialist era could therefore engage in only tangential discussion of this phenomenon. Following the collapse of communism, researchers dealing with the contemporary era focused primarily on political history, while, until recently, the investigation of more specialized topics receded into the background.

(1) Stefano Bottoni, *Long Awaited West: Eastern Europe since 1944*. (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2017) 154–164.

New access to Party-state sources makes it possible to address this formerly taboo subject. Yet the Hungarian literature on collectivization is conflicted; it has been dominated by two stand-points: “*success story*” and “*dead-end*”.(2) The followers of the “*success-story*” approach acknowledge that collectivization was accompanied by economic, administrative and physical force (coercion), but nevertheless emphasize the production results from the late 1960s, claiming collective farms had achieved modernization. Given that no other agricultural sector in the socialist bloc had been able to demonstrate a similar production success, the concept of the “*Hungarian model*” began to spread. However, it was never precisely clarified how this model differed from the kolkhoz exemplar, nor when divergence began. The other position focuses on the genesis story of the establishment of collectivized agriculture during three campaigns (1949–53, 1955–56, 1959–61), disclosing in detail the tools, spread and consequences of state violence. Works that take this position also agree that through reoccurring campaigns of violence the Stalinist kolkhoz system was transplanted into Hungary, and it remained in place in an unchanged form until regime change. The (even by international standards) outstanding production results of the 1970s and 1980s cannot be explained in this interpretive framework, and for this reason these analyses for the most part skip this period in their analyses.

It is clear that both explanations emphasize different periods in the four-decade history of Hungarian agricultural producer cooperatives, yet try to apply the conclusions drawn from these periods to the entire history of socialist agriculture. A different approach is required which moves beyond the two diametrically opposed positions found in the literature.

During my research stays in Germany supported by the Alexander von Humboldt Foundation I learnt a lot about the different methods of the comparative history writing. Since the 1990s, comparative research has become one of the most dynamic fields of historiography both in Europe and in the USA. Among the European countries, the progress of this discipline was especially conspicuous in Germany.(3) It is not a pure coincidence that the German researchers were among the first ones to turn their attention towards the comparative method. After the reunion of Germany, there was an increasing demand to compare the development of the two German states, the GDR and the FRG. Two research centres – *Zentrum für Zeitgeschichtliche Forschung in Potsdam (ZZF)* and *Berliner Kolleg für Vergleichende Geschichte Europas (BKVGE)* at *Freie Universität* – played an outstanding role. In these institutions, the comparative research projects concerning Central and Eastern Europe were soon started, two of which I also joined.(4) This way I had an opportunity to know more about the theoretical, methodological problems and benefits of the international comparative studies. I found especially interesting the way the discipline responded to the current boom in transnational and transregional approaches in the form of ‘entangled histories’ (including connected and transfer history).(5)

This new knowledge inspired me to combine the concept of transfer and multi-dimensional historical comparison. In my recently published English monograph, the concept of transfer became the main analytical category, as it could be used to present both Soviet determinants and Western influences in the post-war history of the Hungarian agriculture. Although there was a brief period when Hungary, along with the other socialist countries, was so to speak hermetically sealed off from the Western half of Europe, this situation gradually changed after *Stalin’s* death (1953). No examination of the period between 1949 and 1989 can be undertaken without taking into consideration relations between the socialist East and the capitalist West.

(2) My historiography chapter summarizes these debates, see: Zsuzsanna Varga, *The Hungarian Agricultural Miracle? Sovietization and Americanization in a Communist Country*. (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2021) XIII–XXI.

(3) Heinz-Gerhard Haupt, “Historische Komparatistik in der internationalen Geschichts-schreibung”, in *Trans-nationale Geschichte. Themen, Tendenzen und Theorien* ed. Gunilla Budde et al., (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck&Ruprecht, 2006); Hartmut Kaelble, *Der historische Vergleich. Eine Einführung zum 19. und 20. Jahrhundert* (Frankfurt/M.–New York: Campus, 1999)

(4) These projects resulted in edited volumes, see: Christoph Boyer, hrg., *Zur Physiognomie sozialistischer Wirtschaftsreformen. Die Sowjetunion, Polen, die Tschechoslowakei, Ungarn, die DDR und Jugoslawien im Vergleich* (Frankfurt/M: Max-Planck-Institut für Europäische Rechtsgeschichte, 2007); Constantin Iordachi and Arnd Bauerkämper, eds., *The Collectivization of Agriculture in Communist Eastern Europe. Comparison and Entanglements* (Budapest–New York: CEU Press, 2014)

(5) Heinz-Gerhard Haupt and Jürgen Kocka, eds., *Comparative and Transnational History. Central European Approaches and New Perspectives*. (New York–Oxford: Berghahn, 2009)

A macro-level approach is required for the exploration of the party-state decision-making processes, but meso- and micro-historical level research has been included in order to investigate the perspectives of those affected by, and participating in, the transfers: the networks of intermediaries (for example what became known as the agrarian lobby) involved in the causes, fields and selection of transfers. Beside the archival and statistical sources, I made intensive use of oral history, too. The findings summarized in this paper are based on my above mentioned monograph, therefore only the most important sources and literature will be referenced in the present article.

Transplanting the Soviet model to Hungary with state violence

The processes that were carried out in the political, economic, and social lives of the countries that fell into the Soviet sphere of influence in the second half of the 1940s are termed Sovietization in the literature. In the economic sphere, the goal was the abolition of private property and the market economy, and the construction of a planned economy based on state and collective ownership; because the persistence of production based on private ownership by wide social groups was incompatible with Communist Party ideology.



Agitation in favour of cooperatives (Source: Fortepan/Collection of Márton Ernő Kovács)

The Stalinist system of socialist agriculture ensured the extraction of revenue from agriculture and the control and discriminatory treatment of producers. The structure stood on three pillars: machine and tractor stations; state-owned farms (*sovkhos*) and artel-type collective farms (*kolkhoz*). The latter became the dominant new form of production unit during Eastern European collectivization.⁽⁶⁾

Specialist literature on the subject generally confines itself to a superficial introduction of the *kolkhoz*, yet this leaves hidden the true content of transfer. My research has returned to the original Russian-language sources, among them the obligatory model charter adopted in 1935.⁽⁷⁾ It was thus possible to expose the discrepancies that existed between the originator of the model and the economic and social relations of the

(6) Robert William Davies, *The Soviet collective farm, 1929–1930*. (London: Macmillan, 1980); Stephan Merl, *Bauern unter Stalin: Die Formierung des Kolchossystems 1930–1941*. (Berlin: Duncker & Humblot, 1990.).

(7) Primernij usztav szelkszohozjajsztevennoj arteli. In: Szobranije zakonov i raszporjazsenik rabocse-krest'janskovo pravityel'stva SZSZSZR. 1935. /11.

recipient. The most determining of these became the fact that, while in the Soviet Union, as a consequence of the 1917 nationalization of the land, peasants only had to be deprived of their individual land-use rights, in the countries that came under Soviet control, it was a peasantry that enjoyed full private ownership of land that had to be forced into the framework of the new large-scale socialist farms. Furthermore, the post-Second World War land reforms, which the communist parties of Central and Eastern Europe themselves supported, expanded to an unprecedented degree the number of landowning peasants in the region. It is, therefore, not surprising that, a few years later, the communist parties did not dare to embark openly on nationalizing land.⁽⁸⁾ Instead, they employed diverse forms of state force (economic and administrative measures, criminal law, and so on) in order to divest the private-property-owning peasantry of land. Some of these were local ‘innovations’ that were unknown in Soviet practice.⁽⁹⁾ The formal retention of private landownership had a great influence on the fact that, in the countries in the Soviet sphere of influence, collectivization became a process that lasted for more than a decade and had to be suspended many times.

The first drive to transfer the kolkhoz model to Hungary was launched in 1949.⁽¹⁰⁾ Despite the enormous state violence it ended in failure by 1953.⁽¹¹⁾ This is reflected clearly in the fact that, during the thaw following Stalin’s death, 40 percent of members left producer cooperatives, reclaimed their land and began to farm privately again.⁽¹²⁾ Works of agrarian history have almost completely ignored this decollectivization, but my monograph has studied it intensively. It was therefore possible to identify that, within the leadership of the communist party, an agrarian lobby group began to form around the new prime minister, Imre Nagy (who was recognized as an agrarian specialist), which radically condemned Hungary’s pre-1953 agrarian policy.⁽¹³⁾ At the same time, it formulated an agricultural-development program that took Hungarian conditions and traditions into account. This group also supported initiatives taken in still-functioning producer cooperatives to accommodate to local needs and change the rigid structure of the Soviet kolkhoz model.

The second collectivization attempt in Hungary, which began in the fall of 1955, also failed after a few months.⁽¹⁴⁾ The forcibly established producer cooperatives began to disintegrate during the summer of 1956, particularly in the western half of the country.⁽¹⁵⁾ By this time, it had become impossible to conceal the fact that forcing the Soviet kolkhoz system onto Hungary had plunged its agriculture into a catastrophic situation, an agriculture which enjoyed excellent climatic and soil conditions, and which for centuries had been famous for its exports. Accumulated food-supply problems contributed in large measure to the outbreak of the 1956 Hungarian Revolution.

- (8) Nigel Swain, “Eastern European Collectivisation Campaigns Compared, 1945–1962” in *The Collectivization of Agriculture in Communist Eastern Europe*, eds. Constantin Iordachi and Arnd Bauerkämper (Budapest–New York: CEU Press, 2014) 497–534.
- (9) József Ö. Kovács, “The Forced Collectivization of Agriculture in Hungary, 1948–1961” In Iordachi and Bauerkämper, *The Collectivization of Agriculture*, 215–221.
- (10) Magyar Nemzeti Levéltár Országos Levéltár (National Archives of Hungary, hereafter cited as MNL OL) M–KS 276. f., 52. cs., 4. ő. e. Jegyzőkönyv az MDP Politikai Bizottság 1948. november 27-i üléséről. [Minutes of the HWP Politburo session November 27, 1948]
- (11) Hungary became, for the first time, a net grain importer and was not able to feed itself. Animal stocks exceeded pre-war levels, by a few percentage points, for the first time in 1950. However, following the decline in 1951, the levels of 1950 could only be reached and surpassed by the middle of the decade. There were lapses in public supply. In the first half of the 1950s nearly 600,000 hectares were left uncultivated due to massive exodus from the land (the abandoning of land, the offering of land to the state on a massive scale, etc.)
- (12) MNL OL, M–KS 276. f. 93. cs., 509. ő. e. A Mezőgazdasági Osztály feljegyzése a termelőszövetkezeti mozgalomról. 1953. július 28. [Memorandum of the Agricultural Department of the CC on the cooperative movement, December 10, 1953]
- (13) János M. Rainer, Imre Nagy: *A Political Biography* (London: I.B. Tauris & Co., 2009) 79–110.
- (14) MNL OL, M–KS 276. f., 53. cs., 213. ő. e., Jegyzőkönyv a Politikai Bizottság 1955. január 26-i üléséről. [Minutes of the HWP Politburo, January 26, 1955]
- (15) MNL OL, M–KS 276. f., 53. cs., 304. ő. e., Jegyzőkönyv a Politikai Bizottság 1956. szeptember 28-i üléséről. [Minutes of the HWP Politburo, September 28, 1956]

This was the situation that confronted the government led by *János Kádár* that came to power, with Soviet assistance, following the defeat of the 1956 uprising. Food-supply became a strategic issue for the new régime, which attempted to compensate for its lack of political legitimacy through promises to increase living standards. In order to increase production and provide incentives for agrarian producers, the *Kádár* government decided upon a correction in agrarian policy that was without precedent in the Eastern Bloc. The 1956 uprising thus represents an important caesura not only in political, but also economic and social history. In November 1956, Hungary became the first country in the bloc to abandon the compulsory-delivery system that was one of the fundamental elements of the Stalinist agricultural system.(16) At the same time, the government halted the formation of producer cooperatives and initiated a new decollectivization phase, the most enduring impact of which was the revival, albeit to a limited degree, of market mechanisms in agriculture. As a result of all of the measures listed above, two-thirds of producer cooperatives were dissolved, and at the same time several hundred thousand peasant farms began work anew.(17)

In late 1958, the Hungarian party leadership took the decision to resume collectivization as a way of demonstrating its allegiance to Moscow and fitting in with the other countries of the bloc. Bulgaria completed the process of collectivization in 1958, Czechoslovakia in 1959, East Germany in 1960, Hungary in 1961 and Romania in 1962.(18) One of the fruits of destalinization was that, by this time, it was possible for the fraternal countries to learn not just from the Soviet Union, but to draw too upon each others' experiences. The discussion touches on how the Hungarian leadership utilized the collectivization models of other socialist countries.(19)

Local research, using archival sources and oral history, greatly facilitated investigation of the mutual impact of the phases of collectivization and decollectivization. By integrating the micro- and meso-levels, it can be shown how the various groups of peasant society reacted to the collectivization campaigns.(20) Different individual and family survival strategies were investigated, together with their reciprocal influence on the behaviour of those who exercised power, and the types of interactions that emerged. Particular attention was paid to how the agrarian lobby was able to get the party leadership to accept grassroots cooperative initiatives, with regard to work organization, remuneration and household plot farming, in spite of the fact that most of them contradicted the original content of the *kolkhoz* model.(21)

Since the new large-scale farms were unable for years to produce the results hoped of them, Hungary was obliged to import bread grain and meat until the middle of the 1960s.(22) This situation prompted the Hungarian political leadership to strike a new compromise with the cooperative members. Even after the completion of collectivization, it maintained locally established "good practices" that had originally been intended as only temporary concessions. In this way, an increasing number of initiatives moved from being officially prohibited to being tolerated and finally to being supported.(23) Although the party leadership later tried to portray this as its own initiative, in reality divergence from the *kolkhoz* model took shape that it did as a collective solution to a multifaceted conundrum. The exercise of pressure from the peasantry played a significant role, as did the mediating activity of the agrarian lobby.

(16) Karl-Eugen Wädekin, "Collectivization in Eastern Europe: The Common Pattern and the Deviations." In *Agrarian Policies in Communist Europe: A Critical Introduction*. ed. Karl-Eugen Wädekin, (The Hague–London: Allanheld: Osmun Publishers–Martinus Nijhoff Publishers, 1982) 63–81.

(17) MNL OL, M–KS 276. f., 28. cs., (1957) 11. ő. e., A Földművelésügyi Minisztérium jelentése a termelőszövetkezeti mozgalom helyzetéről [Report of the Ministry of Agriculture on the situation of collective farms] 4 February 1957.

(18) Swain, "Eastern European Collectivisation" 527–534.

(19) Varga, "The Hungarian Agricultural Miracle", 114–118.

(20) My research was conducted in the county archives of three different regions in Hungary, in Nógrád, Hajdú-Bihar and Zala counties.

(21) The major figures of the agrarian lobby were Lajos Fehér, Ferenc Erdei, Imre Dimény, Ernő Csizmadia.

(22) MNL OL XIX–A–2–gg. 147. d. „Kenyérgabona–levelek” [„Bread-grains letters”] 1961–1964.

(23) These interactions have been analysed in details in my monograph: Varga, "The Hungarian Agricultural Miracle", 129–135.

Transfer of the Western-type modernization model

Learning from the West represented the other means of addressing post-collectivization problems. Beginning in the late 1950s, the agrarian lobby and agrarian economists were already mediating attempts to establish scientific relations with the Western countries that had the highest levels of agricultural production. The first practical success occurred in 1960, when a Hungarian delegation purchased what was then one of the most modern poultry- and egg-production system from the West German company, Lohmann. A separate subchapter of my monograph addresses the initial stages of Western model transfer, presenting the cooperation that developed between the leaders of the agrarian lobby, scientific researchers and practical specialists.(24)

This early opening to the West naturally could not have taken place without the knowledge and approval of the Soviet leadership. Following the defeat of the 1956 uprising, Moscow accorded greater room for maneuver in certain matters to the Hungarian leadership in order to prove the superiority and viability of the socialist system. The impact of this kind of “exceptionalism” made itself felt particularly strongly in agrarian policy, to which *Khrushchev’s* special interest in agriculture also contributed. Hungary was given an important intermediary role.(25)

It was not by chance that the reforms in agriculture preceded by several years the introduction of the New Economic Mechanism on January 1, 1968. The agrarian lobby eliminated the remaining elements of the Stalinist agricultural system as part of the economic reform process. Parallel, the lobby lifted the sector, economically and socially, out of its role as an “*inner colony*”. Comparison of Hungary’s 1967 Cooperative Law with the revised rules of operation of Soviet kolkhozes in 1969 clearly demonstrates the differences that had emerged by this time. The Cooperative Law gave legal status to the “good practices” that had become tried and tested on Hungarian producer cooperatives during the 1960s.(26) The leaders of the agrarian lobby were aware that this all required ideological support. The 1967 law was preceded by prolonged ideological debates, over the course of which the agrarian lobby persuaded the Politburo to issue a decree declaring: cooperative property is equal in status to state property and is indispensable in the long term. This set aside a fundamental Stalinist tenet, and one that had remained effective in the Soviet Union.

Knowledge of these economic, social and legal reform measures is necessary in order to understand how Hungarian producer cooperatives, which had come into being through the transfer of the kolkhoz model, became capable, in the 1970s, of integrating the developed structures of the capitalist agriculture of the time: closed production systems purchased from the United States. The first high-ranking agrarian delegation travelled from Hungary to the United States in 1969, and signed a contract for the purchase of an industrial-type corn-production system.(27) This decision was made at the highest level, given that Hungary operated a party-state system, but research confirmed that, unlike the case when adopting the kolkhoz model, Western model transfer was not from top-to-bottom, but the opposite; and it expanded horizontally. The western companies became partners of state farms and producer cooperatives or their associations (the Bábolna State Farm, the Nádudvar Red Star Producer Cooperative, and so on).

(24) Ibid. 162–167(9) József Ö. Kovács, “The Forced Collectivization of Agriculture in Hungary, 1948–1961” In Iordachi and Bauerkämper, *The Collectivization of Agriculture*, 215–221.

(25) János M. Rainer, “The Sixties in Hungary — some historical and political approaches.” in *Muddling Through in the Long 1960s. Ideas and Everyday Life in High Politics and Lower Classes of Communist Hungary*, ed. György Péteri (Trondheim: Norwegian University of Science and Technology, 2005) 2–26.

(26) Imre Fóris, összeáll., jegyz., *Mezőgazdasági termelőség-tervezési törvény. Földjogi törvény*. (Budapest: Közgazdasági és Jogi Könyvkiadó, 1968)

(27) MNL OL XIX-K-9-ab 34. d. Tájékoztató jelentés a Magyar Forradalmi Munkás-Paraszt Kormány részére a mezőgazdasági szakdelegáció tanulmányútjáról, 1969. [Guiding report on the study trip made by the agricultural delegation to the Hungarian Workers’ and Peasants’ Government, 1969.]

The large-scale farms themselves, therefore, became the mediators of transfer, not party or state organs. It was they, that acted as system administrators and transmitted the developed Western technology to less capital-rich farms. Another disparity between the two model transfers was that when farms took on Western production systems, they had the possibility of choosing between many possible models, economic performance and efficiency being the decisive issues. It is important too to emphasize that the economic actors (state farms and producer cooperatives) were not under an obligation to join, and they could be members of many types of production system at the same time.

As a consequence, by the 1970s a specific hybrid agriculture emerged in Hungary, where the latest Western (John Deere, Claas and Steiger) brands of machinery cultivated the land of state farms and producer cooperatives that has been created after the Soviet model. Importing this machinery was closely linked to know-how transfer, and the necessary conditions for this had been provided by the modernization of intermediate and higher agrarian education.

The Western model transfer produced a visible improvement in economic performance. In the area of crop production, the greatest success was in grains yields, particularly wheat and corn (maize). This provided the foundation for a 37 percent increase in livestock and meat production between 1970 and 1985.(28) Behind this up-swing in producer cooperative production lay a specific division of labor between household-plot farms and the large-scale cooperative units. While the large-scale farms produced good results in the highly mechanized branches of arable crop cultivation, household plots specialized in cultivating labor-intensive vegetables and fruit, as well as raising poultry and pigs.(29)

This model transfer cannot be considered a one-way process. As the Hungarian socialist farms were larger than the American farms, the information accumulated in the Hungarian closed-production systems Hungary was an important novelty. Therefore, the exchange of information between American and Hungarian companies has become regular. In general, the Western interest in hybrid Hungarian agriculture has increased.(30)

Meanwhile, within the socialist bloc, the reform boom of the 1960s slowed down.(31) Socialist enterprises operating according partly to market economy logic became increasingly suspicious. Linked to this was the view that producer cooperatives were 'chasing after' mere profit and group interest rather than the interests of society as a whole. There is no doubt that western model transfer modified the way workers in producer cooperatives thought, their relation to the market and profits, and it was because of precisely this that agricultural producer cooperatives and their entrepreneurially spirited leaders came into the crosshairs of dogmatic political forces. This research has revealed for the first time that show-trial proceedings were launched against more than 1,000 cooperative leaders in the 1970s.(32) These represented the largest number of politically inspired trials in the country since the retributions that followed 1956.

The Western model transfer was slowed down temporarily by the offensive of dogmatic forces, but the process could not be stopped. The strength of the agrarian lobby was weakened, however, by the fact that its representatives were squeezed out of the highest-level decision-making bodies.

(28) This data was published by the Central Statistics Office of Hungary (KSH) but it is based on calculations made by the FAO. See: *A magyar mezőgazdaság nemzetközi összehasonlításban*. [Hungarian agriculture in international comparison] (Budapest: KSH, 1987) 5–12.

(29) Imre Kovách, "Hungary Cooperative farms and Household Plots" in *Many Shades of Red State Policy and Collective Agriculture*, ed. Mieke Meurs, (New York–Oxford: Rowman and Littlefield, 1999) 125–150.

(30) It can be well reconstructed from the contemporary press that in the first half of the 1970s the Hungarian state and collective farms received visitors from Denmark, Austria, Netherlands. Then in 1975 the United States Secretary of Agriculture with a staff of 27 people came to Hungary. A similar visit was repeated in two years later. The West German minister of agriculture was a regular guest in Hungary, too.(31) MNL OL XIX–A–2–gg. 147. d. „Kenyérgabona–levelek” [„Bread-grains letters”] 1961–1964.

(31) After the invasion of Czechoslovakia in 1968, the Hungarian reform process stood alone in the socialist camp. As criticism increased, the multifaceted Hungarian cooperative system became the target of dogmatic political forces, not only in Hungary, but within the camp. Following the Polish ship-yard workers' demonstrations of December 1970 especially, there was a strengthening of the view that Hungarian agriculture was developing at the expense of industry and, therefore, of industrial workers. Bottoni, "Long Awaited West", 168–193.

(32) Zsuzsanna Varga, "Why is Success a Crime? Trials of Managers of Agricultural Cooperatives in the Hungary of the 1970's", *Hungarian Studies Review*, 2013 Fall (40.) 2: 149–176.

In the spring of 1974, as noted above, the main representatives of the reform were dismissed: *Lajos Fehér*, *Rezső Nyers* and, later, *Jenő Fock* and *Imre Dimény* too.

The consequences of this became fully clear only the 1980s, when ever more burdens were heaped on the agrarian sector in order to repay the country's huge accumulated debt. In the first half of the 1980s, producer cooperatives slipped back into the role of "inner colony" reminiscent of the Stalinist period. By modifying material incentives and developing household-plot and ancillary activities, producer cooperatives succeeded for a time in counteracting the increase in state extractions from their revenue and keeping operative their production units that had been modernized by western knowledge and technology-transfer. In these changed internal and external conditions, Hungary's hybrid agriculture reached its developmental limits. Meanwhile, proposals which saw the solution in a gradual liberalization of property relations were being outlined in Hungarian research institutes and later at economic-policy forums. However, the Politburo did not support these reform plans. It knew that the next step after "upsetting" property relations might be a questioning of one-party rule.(33)

Following system change in 1989/90, the accumulated experience of this specific hybrid agriculture was devalued. Today, when serious economic and social tensions, and occasionally political upheavals, are caused by food-shortage in numerous parts of the world, it is timely to re-asses the post-1945 history of Hungarian agriculture.

(33) Ibid. 162–167(9) József Ö. Kovács, "The Forced Collectivization of Agriculture in Hungary, 1948–1961" In Iordachi and Bauerkämper, *The Collectivization of Agriculture*, 215–221.

Prof. Dr. Zsuzsanna VARGA DSc received her PhD in Agrarian History in 1998. She is currently Head of the Modern Hungarian History Department at Eötvös Loránd University (ELTE) in Budapest. She also serves as Director of the Modern Hungarian History PhD Program at the ELTE Faculty of Humanities.

Her main field of research is the history of socialist agriculture in Hungary (collective farms, lobbying, knowledge transfer, etc). Her first book appeared in 2001 under the title *Politika, paraszti érdekvégyesítés és szövetkezetek Magyarországon, 1956-1967*. (Politics, the Assertion of Interests in the Peasantry and Agricultural Cooperatives in Hungary between 1956 and 1967). Later she extended her studies on the interactions between the representatives of political power and the peasantry during the entire Kádár-era. She was awarded the János Bolyai Research Fellowship of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences twice. She was also awarded the János Bolyai Prize in 2013 for her research on the history of the socialist agrarian lobby. Her dissertation for the title Doctor of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences was a synthesis of her research on socialist agriculture, which she successfully defended in 2015.



She is a founding member of the European Rural History Organisation (EURHO) and she serves as a regional representative in its Management Committee and as Vice-President for the period 2019-2021. Since 2015, she has also served as a Scientific Advisory Board Member of the Archives of Rural History (Bern, Switzerland).

The number of her publications exceeds 120, among them five monographs (in Hungarian and English), 30 articles and chapters in international journals and collections of studies; and seven edited volumes. Her latest monograph was published in the Harvard Cold War Studies Book Series: *The Hungarian Agricultural Miracle? Sovietization and Americanization in a Communist Country* (Rowman & Littlefield, 2021).