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The agrarian working class put somewhat centre stage: an often neglected group of workers in the historiography of labour in state-socialist Hungary

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ABSTRACT

This study discusses a body of scholarship which is little-known internationally, written in Hungary in the period between 1949 and 1989: the historiography on agrarian labour from the eighteenth century to the Second World War. This historiography was conceptually inclusive in that it explored the history of many groups of agrarian workers, the varied types of labour in which they were involved, including long-term contracts, day and servant labour, seasonal migration and non-agricultural forms of labour, the role of agrarian labour in socio-economic development, and the political movement of 'agrarian socialism'. This historiography for a large part remained embedded in three adjacent research clusters: peasant studies, local and regional history, and the history of the labour movement. This study argues that scholarly approaches and interests, and institutional framings specific to each of these clusters, were of key importance in generating the extensive scholarship that is reviewed. The fact that Hungary had been a dominantly agrarian country before 1945, the Leninist vision of the 'alliance of the workers and the peasants' that was to bring about socialism in Eastern Europe and the state-condoned interest in the history of the labour movement and labour more generally were other important factors conducive to, and to various degrees putting their stamp on, this research. Given its findings within a Marxian or classical social-history framing, and its focus on an often neglected group of workers, the historiography on agrarian labour written in state-socialist Hungary deserves to be integrated into the historiographical canon. This study discusses this scholarship against the backdrop of present-day global labour history. In pointing to some of its area-, time- and context-specific characteristics, the study aims to contribute to a global dialogue in labour history that is sensitive to and critically appreciative of different historiographical trajectories and traditions across world regions.

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In the Stormy Corner

Between 13 and 15 March and March 1971, a number of high-profile events involving some of the *crème de la crème* of the Hungarian historians' craft took place in the town of

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Békéscsaba in southeastern Hungary and in Budapest. On 13 March the first festive event was held in Békéscsaba, commemorating the centennial of András L. Áchim's birth. Áchim, a medium-level land owner (his family originally owned 77 hectares), born in Békéscsaba in 1871, had been the leader of two subsequent peasant parties demanding radical land reform in the early twentieth century, as well as the founder of the Association of Smallholders, Agrarian Workers and Pick and Shovel Men (the so-called *kubikosok* or 'cubics') which in 1908 was instrumental in bringing together a large peasant congress in Békéscsaba.¹ Now, a century after Áchim's birth, a memorial plaque, intended to remember the location of Áchim's former house, was unveiled. Ferenc Pölöskei, eminent historian and editor, as well as one of 10 authors of a two-volume work published in 1962, *The Movements of Agrarian Workers and Poor Peasants in Hungary 1848 to 1948*,² gave the speech at the unveiling ceremony. The next day, 14 March, Géza Féja, doyen of the village sociography movement of the interwar period and author of the famous book *Stormy Corner: Soil and People of the Lower Tisza Region* published in 1937,³ gave the celebratory speech at another festive gathering held in Békéscsaba. The speaker who had opened this meeting did not fail to underline that it had been the 'long row of agrarian-socialist movements' which, with their beginnings in the early 1890s, 'had prepared for the appearance of András Áchim'. In the audience were leading party, trade-union and government figures, as well as the Directors of the Institute for Party History of the Hungarian Socialist Workers' Party and the Institute for the Historical Sciences of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences, Henrik Vass and Zsigmond Pál Pach. Last but not least, on 12 and 15 March, an 'academic sitting' was held in Budapest and Békéscsaba with Aladár Mód, life-long Communist and leading Marxist theoretician, giving the chairman's résumé.⁴

Békéscsaba, the capital city of one of those Hungarian counties which were labelled Stormy Corner, had been one of the strongholds of the 'agrarian socialist movements' and violent social conflict surrounding them during the later decades of the Monarchy. The region continued to be a centre of agrarian misery and eruptive social conflict throughout the interwar period.

Ten years after the Békéscsaba festivities, the historians' crowd would once again travel to the heart of the Stormy Corner, this time to Orosháza. In 1981, a two-day 'academic meeting' was held here on the occasion of the 90th anniversary of the 'bloody First May' 1891 of Orosháza, a date symbolizing the beginning of the age of 'agricultural workers' socialism' in Hungary. Before 1914, the town of Orosháza, then a giant village with more than 20,000 inhabitants, had been at the centre of dynamic, export-oriented agro-capitalism. The 1981 conference held in this symbolic place was entirely dedicated to the history of 'Agrarian Socialism in Hungary'. In his 'summary remarks' Péter Hanák, a leading Hungarian historian for decades before the systemic change and up until his death in 1997, presented – in preparation for the centenary of agrarian socialism in 1991 – a detailed programme for the further study of this historical phenomenon.⁵ Up until the present day, the term Stormy Corner, which is said to have been invented by Géza Féja for his 1937 sociography, is used in the Hungarian language to refer to the particular region in southeastern Hungary which under state socialism repeatedly attracted so many historians.

Beyond the Stormy Corner

The particular motivation and setting for the high-profile events in the Stormy Corner in 1971 and 1981 at first glance seem to confirm some of the persevering stereotypes about labour history under state socialism, namely its close nexus with party and state politics, its narrow focus on the history of the labour movement, and the teleological construction of the history of the labour movement as directly and imperturbably leading from the social-democratic forerunners to the Communist workers' parties of the twentieth century. However, the high-profile interest in labour conflict in the agrarian as opposed to the industrial sphere epitomized by the 1971 and 1981 events is remarkable if it is compared to the dominant international trends in the historiography of the labour movement and its institutional backings at the time, which tended to focus on the industrial sphere.⁶ In addition, this interest in agrarian labour conflict formed part of a much larger body of scholarship, which is not well known internationally, written in Hungary in the period between 1949 and 1989 on the history of agrarian labour from the eighteenth century to the Second World War. This study discusses the concepts and findings of this scholarship against the backdrop of present-day global labour history. In pointing to some of the area-, time- and context-specific characteristics of this scholarship, it aims to contribute to a global dialogue in labour history that is sensitive to and critically appreciative of different historiographical trajectories and traditions across world regions.

The historiography on agrarian labour reviewed in this contribution was to a large extent produced within and published at the core of the historical profession. It was, in other words, associated with key institutions, journals and historians, or at least formed part of the professional canon. The large-scale opening of the archives after 1945, alongside the explicit promotion of research in the modern, capitalist epoch, which key institutions regarded as an important means of generating support for the systemic change after 1945,⁷ certainly played an important role in preparing the ground for a new history of agrarian labour. The historians at the core of the profession and involved in the study of agrarian labour often referred to a parallel large body of scholarship, folklore and ethnographic studies, which, it was argued, used important alternative sources and were complementary to their own work. Even more systematically, the historiography on agrarian labour under state socialism appropriated the tradition of the village sociology which had peaked in Hungary in the 1930s, and was pro-actively kept alive yet not pursued further in any substance during state socialism.⁸ An early important reprint was Géza Féja's *Stormy Corner* in 1957, mentioned above. Translated into many languages and well-known even in the Western world is Gyula Illyés' documentary novel *People of the Puszta*, first published in 1936, reprinted several times in Hungary and regularly taught in Hungarian schools under state socialism.

In this contribution, I will argue, first, that the scholarship on agrarian labour written by historians in Hungary under state socialism paid due attention to some of those phenomena which have played a key role in the international debates around the 'new global labour history' of our days. This new history pursues an inclusive agenda when exploring the history of labour, and aims to no longer conceptually or empirically privilege the history of labour in the early and 'successfully' industrializing world regions such as Western Europe or the United States of America. The historical development and relationship of free and unfree as well as paid and unpaid labour, workers' informal political activities as opposed to their formal organization, the labour of families and households rather than individual

workers alone, the combination by individual workers and households of different types of labour and so on, have formed key preoccupations of this historiography.⁹ Hungarian historiography on agrarian labour written under state socialism – while certainly only partly compatible with concepts driving the new global labour history – uncovers and describes a myriad of related phenomena systematically and in rich detail. It does so in an often highly empiricist fashion, embellishing and bolstering the resulting narrative with reference to specific patterns of capitalist development in Hungary or to debates on divergent forms of capitalist development in Europe. With reference to these framings, this historiography can also be read as a relevant contribution from a particular geographical area to a more global and more inclusive type of labour history.

Second, I will argue that a number of particular factors pertaining to the history of Hungarian historiography have contributed to what could be labelled a lack of visibility of the historiography of agrarian labour, even though it formed part of the historiographical canon. This lack of visibility at the time did not simply follow from the fact that certain traditional narrow Marxist notions of labour history have tended to regard peasants as backward and not (fully) contributing to the class struggle. Rather, I argue, this lack of immediate visibility of the historiography on agrarian labour discussed here was rooted in the fact that it did not emerge as a clearly defined research field in its own right. To a large extent, this scholarship remained embedded in three adjacent research clusters. I have not been able to identify any single book or series of books and articles which in one way or another would point to the history of agrarian labour in capitalist Hungary as its overarching thematic focus within its title. At the same time, I found three large clusters of publications which have generated abounding knowledge on the history of agrarian labour. First, there are those publications which were directly driven or stimulated by the sacrosanct interest in the labour movement in general and agrarian socialism in particular. These publications often combined or expanded on this interest so as to create knowledge on the social history and the living and labour conditions of the agrarian population involved. Second, publications belonging to the professional and well-received genre of local, county or regional history, which lived a separate life institutionally, produced important knowledge on the history of agrarian labour. Third, I found a clearly defined and politically approved-of interest in the history of the peasantry or the peasant question very broadly conceived, and a related extensive cluster of publications which addressed in great detail the history of agrarian labour. Publications on Hungarian economic history could be said to form a fourth cluster contributing to the knowledge production on the history of agrarian labour at the core of the historians' profession. However I leave these writings aside here, since they are of less relevance when read against the backdrop of the research interests informing the new labour history of our days.

In the following sections I introduce and discuss – in reverse order – the contribution to the historiography of agrarian labour in the period between 1848 and 1945 as traceable in each of these three adjacent research clusters and relevant for the new European and global history of our days. All of these publications are based on extensive original research. In addition, in many cases, they built on (other) detailed case studies focusing on specific elements of local histories and other original historiography, on scholarly publications published before 1945, on interviews, memoirs and so on. In turn, many of these publications were followed by and in some cases triggered further studies on local aspects and various detailed questions. In the concluding section, I shall reflect on the relationship between my findings on the three clusters of studies and the present condition and prospects of labour

history, and try to make a case for re-evaluating and integrating Hungarian historiography on agrarian labour written under state socialism into the new global labour history.

Specialists in Marxist historiography and/or Eastern Europe might be tempted to explain away the interest of Hungarian historiography under state socialism in agrarian labour via reference to the particular Eastern European and Leninist variety of socialism as to be built on or rooted in the 'alliance of workers and peasants'.¹⁰ However, as I will argue in the following sections, the Leninist-Marxist inclusiveness regarding the history of the peasantry formed only one amongst several key points of reference which enabled the production of a varied Hungarian scholarship on the history of agrarian labour from the nineteenth century to the advent of state socialism.

Peasant history and the special place of agrarian labour in Hungarian and Eastern European History

Agrarian history, and peasant history as one of its core areas, made great strides forward in Hungary since the 1960s. In quantitative terms the peasantry was the dominant social group in Hungary under capitalism. Historians who – for various and quite divergent reasons – were interested in the special character of both Hungarian agricultural development and Hungarian agricultural society developed broad and inclusive definitions of agrarian labour and paid keen attention to its varieties and transformations. In 1961, the comparative historian Emil Niederhauser published a historical sketch describing two types of agricultural development in Eastern Europe in the latter part of the nineteenth century and pointed, in broad strokes, to its consequences for agrarian labour.¹¹ In 1963, an Agrarian History Research Group was installed within the Hungarian Academy of Sciences.¹² Two years earlier, in 1961, the doyen of peasant history, István Szabó, whose work reached back well into the interwar period, had presented and subsequently published an outline of the history of the 'Peasantry in Hungary in the Epoch of Capitalism' in *Századok*, the venerable and prestigious key journal of the historians' profession. Szabó in this study introduced a 'working group' of young historians in Budapest and all over the country whose joint work in progress focused on the period before the First World War.¹³ The monumental two-volume publication *The Peasantry in Hungary in the Epoch of Capitalism 1848–1914*, edited by Szabó, appeared in 1965.¹⁴ Szabó and his contributors played a key role in establishing the study of all forms of peasant labour, and the differentiation among them, as a relevant and up-to-date subject of research. The 1961 outline was already looking at the 'large and growing masses of peasants living from wage labour' and treating them as an important group in their own right, forming a core component of any history of the peasantry. 'This [social] stratum not only includes those who were without all means of production but also those who besides their smallholdings fell back on wage labour.' Such strata had existed long before 1848 and included the traditional cottars. After 1848 '[b]esides the two most general forms of wage labour, the servants and the day labourers, old rudimentary feudal forms, accommodating to the capitalist transformation, continue to exist, yet new [forms] also come into being, such as the *summás* workers' (to whom I will return in a moment). Two other similarly large groups of workers were associated, Szabó argued, with 'decomposition as a problem zone'. There was one stratum of workers who 'while staying in the framework of the village and not breaking away in a definite sense from agricultural labour, finds the base of its existence already outside of this sphere'. This group included pick and shovel

men (the 'cubics'), forestry workers and others. A second group sought refuge in migration within 'but no less' beyond the country and especially overseas, in this way breaking away from the village.¹⁵ Szabó summarized: 'The concept of the peasantry in this larger sense is – eminently dissimilar class bonds notwithstanding – defined and bound together by economic, social, life style-related and cultural indicators.'¹⁶

A 200-page section of the 1965 two-volume publication was dedicated to the various forms of peasant production and peasant labour, while a 150-page section on the 'landless' agrarian population in reality discussed the conditions and various forms of dependent labour performed by smallholders and landless peasants. In his introduction to the two volumes, Szabó did not fail to mention those originally planned contributions which in the end could not be included. One study was missing from the section on peasants which would have dealt with land tenancy, sharecropping, step-by-step acquisition through working the land, and so on in the context of activities aimed at acquiring land. The section on the landless population was reduced to studies on three groups 'who actually emerged on the ground of the capitalist system' whereas a 'multi-faceted ... discussion of the various further strata of the decomposing/disintegrating peasant block' was, as Szabó admitted, a project so large that an 'independent work' was needed for the purpose.¹⁷

In the 150-page section on the 'landless' agrarian population, a systematic enquiry into the varieties of combinations of different types of dependent labour over time was undergirded in a lively manner via reference to, for instance, contemporary sayings such as 'I have been everything save a hung man.'¹⁸ The related unpaid family labour in and around the house and, if applicable, on the smallholding, was mentioned and present throughout the contributions, yet it was also treated as a given and visibly not considered a type of work worth a separate contribution.

The 50-page contribution on the *summás* workers, seasonal workers bringing their own tools and being recruited for a fixed period of time from often far away regions, may serve as a particularly rich study exemplifying the approach. The *summás* workers often worked for a lump sum or were paid monthly; at times, accomplishment-related elements, and so on, were added. *Summás* work was organized as 'gang' labour, often building on ties between families and relatives, with contracts signed well in advance by the always male leader. Over time, recruitment could also take on a more commercialized character, involving independent professionals. The *summás* workers were maintained on the large and also smaller estates in a form agreed upon in detail in advance. Zoltán Sárközi, the author of the chapter on *summás* work,¹⁹ quotes at length from the contracts which gave details not only on the wages and the number of men and women (sometimes labelled in the contracts, together with children, 'halfhands') hired in this way, but also, for example, about the strictly gender-differentiated so-called 'konvenció', with women as a rule receiving a half-allotment of wine and a reduced allotment of food (sometimes half of what the men received). The 'konvenció' formed a quintessential element of the contracts, and Sárközi quotes Gyula Illyés' masterful description of the arrival of the 'gang' of pale and slimmed-down workers on 1 May at the *puszta*. The locals would barely recognize in the returning workers the healthy and well-nourished people who had left at the end of the previous October. The contracts also referred to the organization of cooking for and feeding the workers. Sometimes the estate hired a separate woman cook for the purpose; in other cases the 'gang' itself had to include such a female cook, whose duties and allotment were separately described.

Using written and oral sources Sárközi's study takes pains to establish the exact reasons, time, geography and spread (including in terms of numbers of workers) of this type of labour, the direction of migration, especially of non-*magyar* workers within the country, as well as the in- and out-migration and even the parallel developments in other Central Eastern European countries. The study discusses how the rise of the *summás* type of organizing labour had been related to the decline in the grain price and crop changes from the 1870s. It mentions how these developments contributed to growing pressure on the more local work force, pointing to the demand for (additional) portions of unpaid labour to be performed, for additional products to be handed over to the estate for free, and, especially in corn production, the reduction of the share, or even the end, of sharecropping. Sárközi does not miss quoting many examples of how the 'gangs', especially of non-*magyar* workers, were used to break the famous harvesters' strikes of the more local agrarian workforce. In the end, these latter episodes, however, remain firmly placed in the pre-history of the spread of *summás* work, the larger-scale developments at the time, and the history of *summás* work in the years after the strikes. Sárközi also refers to the new agrarian labour legislation²⁰ introduced since the 1890s which included serious penalties in case of breach of contract for all agrarian workers who did not qualify as servants, who for their part often subsisted on annual contracts.

Imre Katona's study on 'Transitional Forms of Wage Labour' is somewhat more of an overview of many types of work and less rich in detail as compared to the study on *summás* work.²¹ It includes larger sections aiming at generalization, comparison and conceptual evaluation. Katona, who in the introductory section quotes the 'hung man' saying, was more interested than Sárközi in the evolving professional and workers' consciousness of some of the groups of workers and their often unsuccessful endeavours to avoid falling back on agricultural labour. He follows up more systematically than Sárközi on the combination of wage labour with labour related to the status as smallholder or landless peasant, and the division of labour within the 'gangs' and the household. Like the other authors, Katona also talked about the 'remnants' of feudal relationships, the 'in-between' character of the situation, the 'Prussian' road of Hungarian agricultural development, and so on. However, in tandem with all the others, he never lets himself be distracted from the empirical detail and richness of the history of agrarian labour, or the aspiration to paint a faithful picture of all its variety.

These and other authors' writing about the pre-1914 period tended to agree with those studying the interwar period that the somewhat open-ended and here and there still 'progressive' character of the developments around agrarian labour had been transformed into a dead-end road of 'hopelessness' or despair in the interwar period. Already some of the village sociographers of the 1930s had tended to conceive of this 'society' as a special social formation. Géza Féja in the introduction he added to the 1957 edition of *Stormy Corner* underlined that 'hopelessness' was the people's most 'devastating contagion'. When conducting his field research in Hungarian villages in the 1930s Féja had received information about a peasant women's sect. These women had left their families, assembled in the house of one Sára Török, the instigator, where they lay down on a pallet and refused to eat and drink, to the effect that some of them died.²²

The 1970s witnessed a renaissance of conceptual thinking about Hungarian development with a special focus on the 'agrarian society' of the interwar period. The interest in large patterns of socio-economic development and the related social formations in different parts

of Europe visibly informed the writings of historians such as Péter Gunst, and generated renewed interest in the earlier writings of Ferenc Erdei, one of the doyens of interwar sociology.²³ Both of these authors conceived of the specific social structures and forms of labour that characterized ‘agrarian society’ and its relations to Hungarian society at large in the interwar world as a product of such larger trends. In 1976 Ferenc Erdei’s hitherto unpublished manuscript ‘Hungarian Society between the World Wars’, written in 1944/45, was published in the journal *Valóság*. Erdei in this study had aimed to develop a conceptual vocabulary different from the ‘senseless and useless’ one provided by Western sociology – this is how he had put this insight back in 1938 – so as to be able to describe and explain the divided and blocked ‘social structure’ of Hungarian society. Due to a long-term ‘phase delay’, an excluded ‘peasant underworld’ had been frozen into a quasi-permanent existence. In contradistinction to the standard type of the working class, this underworld did not partake in Hungary’s ongoing bourgeois development. Erdei considered this fact to be the key problem of Hungarian society in the period before the advent of state socialism.²⁴ The 1970s also saw a collected re-edition of the work of Ferenc Erdei. Péter Gunst was a member from the beginning of the *Agrarian History Research Group* of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences, and a key figure in research on agrarian history in the later decades of state socialism. Retrospectively, Gunst not only insisted that he had been a Marxist all along, but also claimed that his non-orthodox conviction that Hungary did not belong to Eastern Europe but to some in-between sector bearing the characteristics of both the Eastern and the Western European type of development had been fully developed by the early 1970s.²⁵ In the 1980s, Gunst published his *The Peasant Society in Hungary in the Interwar Period*, which was conceptualized as an inclusive piece of scholarship with a long chapter devoted to the ‘way of life’ of the ‘peasant society’. *The Peasant Society*, as it aimed to translate these conceptual underpinnings into empirical research, was clearly influenced, but in important aspects also went beyond, the traditions of writing the history of agrarian labour discussed so far. In terms of the inclusion of all landless and other poor strata living in the countryside and involved in labour in primary production, Gunst’s study was very similar to Szabó’s two-volume edition published more than 20 years earlier. In conceptual terms, the fact that due to delayed industrialization the peasantry could not dissolve as quickly as necessary was identified as the ‘ultimate malady’ of the ‘peasant society’. Given a number of specific additional changes, this ‘hybrid’ situation in the 1920s and 1930s generated the ‘total crisis of the peasant society’. All ‘peasant’ strata were ‘shrivelling’ and ‘the pressure within the closed pot was growing’.²⁶ When describing the variety of the forms of agrarian labour, Gunst emphasizes the instability of agrarian labour and workers’ involvement in varying types of labour. Gunst’s research and approach are innovative in that he presents a methodologically sophisticated analysis not only of the wages but the overall direct and indirect income and thus the standard of living of each of the strata identified, paying keen attention to variety within each stratum and in terms of geography. The focus both on establishing the standard of living of various groups is connected with another innovative feature: the focus on households and families as key units of analysis. The latter also means that the division of labour within the family, the phenomenon of income-pooling, and the income-generating activities of women become much more visible as compared to earlier scholarship. The wives of agricultural servants, of ‘cubics’, and – if these women stayed at home – of *summás* workers, often and whenever possible hired themselves out as day labourers. These findings are also supported by quantitative data. Gunst underlines – referring,

once again, to a doyen of interwar sociography, Péter Veres – that ‘the standard of living of any single agro-proletarian family in fact was determined by the composition of the family’, i.e. the ‘number of the dependents’ and ‘the number of earners.’²⁷ When discussing the varied character of agrarian labour relations, Gunst again refers to the family. ‘[W]ithin the families the [labour] relations mostly were mixed; *summás* workers, sharecroppers and day labourers could be found within the same family, and even the same individual’ engaged in these various types of labour relations.²⁸

Gunst, in closing his *The Peasant Society*, large sections of which can be read as another important contribution to the history of agrarian labour, refers to a number of research gaps. One of them is the question of peasant sects, which – while a future subject of study in its own right – possibly were to be understood as one ‘outlet’ for the pressure in the closed ‘pot’ of the Hungarian ‘peasant society’ of the interwar period.²⁹ The identification and conceptualization of issues to be addressed by future research, and translation of these insights into systematic collaborative research plans and projects, was a universal feature of labour historiography under state socialism.

Inclusive local and regional history

The studies and publications of a nationwide outlook discussed so far made use, among other things, of the results of local studies, and some of the authors themselves at the beginning of their careers published one or more specialized local studies. Under state socialism, local and county-level history developed early on into a burgeoning branch of not infrequently high-quality historical research in its own right. This development was in all likelihood connected in particular to the ‘radical’ modernization of the archives, which made research on the local and county level much easier than before. In addition, it profited from the large-scale expansion of the holdings of the county archives induced by the social and political transformation after 1945, which made available many archives, for instance those of the large estates of the pre-1945 period, for public research.³⁰ Authors, institutions and research groups with a sustained interest in the history of one region often pursued a broad and inclusive, or at least a multiple, interest in various aspects of the history of these regions, which as a rule historically had been strongly agricultural in character. As a result, the oeuvre of these historians, and/or the volumes or clusters of volumes emerging within these contexts, tended to address various dimensions of the history of agrarian labour, among other topics. This explains why some high-profile key works on agrarian labour or including a focus on agrarian labour published over the decades focused on regional developments. Virtually all of the publications in this cluster were kept in close conversation with local sources and repeatedly included extensive reprints and facsimiles of original sources. The publications of Klára T. Mérey, whose work fed into this second cluster of writings, may serve as an example of how the holistic interest in one region could make important contributions to the larger history of agrarian labour via both the establishment in minute detail of systematic historical trends, and the exploration of new research questions arising from such foundational research. Mérey was a researcher at the Trans-Danubian Scientific Institute (of the Centre of Regional Research of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences) from 1952 to 1990.³¹ After her first important study, published in 1953 in *Századok*, her work over the decades focused nearly exclusively on a limited geographical area, especially Somogy County, in southwestern Hungary. Her work

published in the state-socialist period dealt with the history of agriculture and industry in this region, and included several studies with a local and highly specialized focus. Mérey's work gradually moved from an interest in agrarian labour to issues of industrialization. As her knowledge developed, she began to pursue innovative research agendas. For example, in a study published in 1968, Mérey explored the question: 'Why did Slovak Workers from Trencsén County Come to the Southern Trans-Danubian Region to Work Here?' She first shows that in Trencsén County, today in Slovakia, agrarian property relations, and so on, were more disadvantageous as compared to in Somogy County located in the Trans-Danubian region, while agrarian wages after 1897 were no longer lower in Trencsén County as compared to those regions in Hungary which attracted Slovak workers in large quantities. Mérey finds the explanation for the continued large-scale seasonal migration of Slovakian workers to Somogy County in a number of combined factors. At the time, only seasonal out-migration secured continuous employment for many months. The Slovakian workers were hired for work with sugar beets which was particularly burdensome and required specific skills, which were either not available in the counties of destination, or for which it was difficult to find local workers there at harvest time. Workers also fled multiple taxation and other burdensome circumstances in Trencsén County. Last but not least, Mérey speculates that large-scale seasonal out-migration might also have constituted a means of 'self-protection of the Slovakian workers against wage deterioration in their home county'.³²

Examples of the numerous multi-volume publications which advanced the knowledge on agrarian labour via focusing on local and regional contexts include the six-volume *Historical and Ethnographic Anthology on The People of Kőrös*, published between 1956 and 1965, and *Studies in the History of Békéscsaba*, published in 1970. Publications such as these include studies on, for example, 'The Social and Legal Conditions of the Harvest Workers in Békés County around the Turn of the Century', which discusses in full detail the changing stratification of this social group over time, or 'The Stratification of Bondservants in Békés County in the 18th and 19th Centuries'.³³ A systematic history of the role and development of regional history under Hungarian state socialism has not been written so far, and any more detailed analysis of its contribution to the historiography of agrarian labour is beyond the scope of this contribution.

The (agrarian) labour movement and beyond

The third cluster of studies of interest with regard to the history of agrarian labour had strong roots in and connections to the sacrosanct scholarship on agrarian workers' movements, including their legal and often violent suppression. Studies published in early state socialism legitimized the interest in agrarian socialism via explicit reference to the 'beginnings of the formation' of the 'alliance' which united the 'masses, [and] above all the peasantry' under the leadership of the working class. The emergence of an industrial proletariat of considerable size notwithstanding, Hungary before 1914 had remained an 'agricultural country' in which the capitalist development of agriculture was dominated by (quasi-)feudal large estates. The Social-Democratic Party had initially played a key role in bringing about the agrarian-socialist movement in the early 1890s. Agrarian socialism in the Stormy Corner generated even international attention. After the gendarmerie fired into a crowd of several thousand agrarian workers

in Hódmezővásárhely, another town in the region, in 1894, the 'international labour movement picked up on the by then unequalled phenomenon' of agrarian socialism in Hungary, and in a letter to the congress of the Hungarian Social-Democratic Party, Friedrich Engels himself referred to this violent clash. However, the Hungarian social democrats at the time failed to support the agrarian-socialist movement as it took on an anti-systemic character and demanded the distribution of land. In 1897, this led to the formation of the 'independent' socialist party, which took up the latter demand. The split separated the agricultural working class from the 'putrefied' Social-Democratic Party, a fact which by the end of the 1890s 'inevitabl[y]' led to the 'defeat of the peasants' struggle'.³⁴

In later decades, too, we find studies which emphatically embed the history of the agrarian and peasant question and the related social struggle and working-class organization in the Marxist-Leninist tradition adapted to the Hungarian party line. Lenin himself, so the argument went, in his later years revised his views on the agrarian question, accepting and advocating for Eastern Europe a politics which in this regard put 'centre stage the struggle of the peasants for the liquidation of the feudal remnants and for land'. In Hungary, the East–West European divide historically had found expression in the fact that in the country, which was characterized by the 'Eastern' type of agrarian relations – 'with non-insignificant deviation' as compared to Russia – a social-democratic party had developed which 'built on the Western model'. Historically, this 'contradiction' was the central factor explaining many further developments, including the mismatch between the extraordinary importance of agrarian labour and its movements on the one hand, and the politics pursued by the social democrats on the other. Reference to this constellation served as a point of departure for developing many of the concepts (to be) pursued when dealing with the history of agrarian labour in Hungary.³⁵

In this way, from the early 1950s, reference to the special role of agriculture and agrarian labour in Central Eastern Europe, and Hungarian agrarian socialism as a social phenomenon which at one historical moment had been 'unequalled' in Europe, justified a special focus on these sectors in the historiography of the labour movement. Over the decades, the history of *The Movements of Agrarian Workers and Poor Peasants* in Hungary was analysed in broader and less schematic terms as compared to the early years. The 1962 two-volume publication mentioned in the introductory section, encompassing the whole period from 1848 to 1948, is a work of lasting historiographical and empirical relevance.

The interest in the history of agrarian socialism gave rise to a third cluster of studies relevant for this review of the historiography on agrarian labour as it is broadly conceived. This cluster of studies expanded on and went beyond the well-known type of the classical political history of the labour movement in that it used the history of agrarian socialism as a springboard to explore many aspects of social, and to a degree cultural, history which are relevant in terms of developing a broader understanding of labour history. In this cluster, we find publications with both a more national and a more regional focus, and Klára Mérey's work discussed above exemplifies this connection, since her earliest publications focused on agrarian socialism.³⁶ While the studies belonging to this third cluster often did not manage to go beyond schematic ideas about the relationship between 'movement' and 'condition', or were not even interested in discussing the complexity of this issue, they still contain knowledge and argument of continued interest for labour history today. The two publications emerging from the 1971 and 1981 meetings in Békéscsaba

and Orosháza respectively testify to the interest of some of the historians involved in the study of agrarian socialism in developing a deeper understanding of the history of this phenomenon in a broader context. While there was no strong focus on agrarian labour in the *András L. Áchim Memorial Book 1871–1971* which, as we have seen, documented the academic and celebratory meetings and events in Békéscsaba and Budapest in 1971, even this volume contributed to the broad conception of the historiography of agrarian labour. József Becsei's chapter on 'The Economic and Social Structure of Békéscsaba' at the turn of the century gives a quantitative analysis and quotes, for example, the official county authorities as they give detail about these types of work, and the directly related social protests, which local agrarian workers labelled 'usury'.³⁷ István Király's lengthy contribution on 'András L. Áchim, the Democratic Peasant Politician' – after reconsidering inherited scholarly debates around agrarian socialism – introduces missing and newly discovered sources and the memory still alive in and around Áchim's family. The study paints a complex and even today enlightening picture of the multi-layered character and place of peasant and land reform politics in Hungarian history before 1914. In closing, Király quotes the great Hungarian poet and journalist Endre Ady who, after Áchim had been severely beaten and subsequently died in 1911, wrote in memory of Áchim:

This poor, murdered Ondris [spelled to simulate the local dialect, SZ] was not a Messiah, and those who are alive for sure are of more value than he who is dead already. But ... those who injure him injure those who are alive, and those who mire him mire themselves, because he is a – if not perfectly well-made – György Dózsa.³⁸

Dózsa was the leader of the Hungarian peasant rebellion in the early sixteenth century.

Taken together, the *Áchim Memorial Book*, conveying the celebratory and even poetic atmosphere of the series of events in March 1971, is a mixture of some more orthodox or schematic and many more complex and open-ended contributions, and a remarkable read. The edited volume following up on the 1981 meeting in Orosháza focused, just like this later meeting itself, on the professional historians' studies and debates, as well as future research plans. One rather remarkable contribution came from Ferenc Szabó, then in the middle of his long-term tenure as director of the Békés County Archives, who for decades stimulated and promoted any number of studies on any number of aspects of the history of the region, including its many smaller towns. Szabó in his 'Precursors of the Agrarian Socialist Movement in the Stormy Corner' discusses existing knowledge on and research strategies to be designed to advance the historical comprehension of the pre-history of agrarian socialism in the decades from the 1850s onwards. The study draws attention to questions related to education and its unequal development within the region and between the different denominations within the region, points to the relevance of the protracted and bitter legal struggle and court cases related to the relationship between peasants and nobles with regard to noble land (*úrbéri perek*), and to the various forms of more or less spontaneous rebellion, for instance in response to tax issues, and so on. Szabó claims that much more detailed and multi-layered research into the biographies of various peasant leaders and the further promotion of a multitude of local studies – an amazing number of which he is already able to quote in his endnotes – will lead to the 're-evaluation of the consciousness, education, organizational experience and political susceptibility' of the small peasants and agrarian workers of the region.³⁹

The work of Ferenc Virágh, who was one of the participants of the 1981 Orosháza meeting, may serve as a concluding example of the cluster of work expanding the narrow focus on agrarian socialism. Virágh, who served as a lower-level and high-school teacher in Békéscsaba

and Budapest (1945–78) and as a researcher at Eötvös Loránd University (1968–86),⁴⁰ during his lifetime studied many aspects of the history of one large region, in his case the Stormy Corner. His first monograph, published in 1964, dealt with *The Condition and the Struggle of the Small Peasantry and the Working Class of Békés County in the Counter-Revolutionary Period*. Conceived of as a contribution to the historiography of the political struggles of agrarian labour, the book ventures deeply into the terrain of social history. It opens with a discussion of the limited character of the land reform after the First World War and repeatedly describes examples of the legal struggle and other interventions of the landless people, thus putting centre stage their agency and the various limiting factors and actors in an informed manner. Although inconclusive, the narrative still gives a dense description of the complexity of the social-legal and social relations and interactions at stake. Virágh then moves on to describe the intensification of the exploitative character of labour relations in the period, pointing to the enlargement and appearance of additional ways of unpaid labour, using, for example, a local newspaper of May 1932 in which a 'day labourer' is quoted as saying:

'Last week I worked for two days, ... – for free. I had to do mowing, since the farmer only in this way is willing to hire me for the harvest. ... I had to work for free now so that in the summer I shall be able to work for a few days – for a share of the product.'

These and other 'feudal remnants', which characterized agrarian labour relations in many parts of Hungary, 'in terms of their function were rich sources of capitalist accumulation'.⁴¹ The same 75-page section of the book contains systematic information on the living standard and living conditions of the various groups of agricultural workers, 'cubics', servants, small tenants, and so on. Virágh thus applies methods of social history which would be widely employed internationally from the 1960s onwards to groups of workers often neglected in labour history at the time. The section closes with a *summás* workers' song of 'pulsating rhythm', which in its refrain exclaims that 'those who don't scythe and don't harvest – shall eat under the table', and is followed by a section on the social movements of the agrarian workers.⁴² Nearly 25 years later, in 1988, Virágh published another monograph, on *The Social-Economic Background of the Struggles of the Radical Small Peasants of the Southern Pannonian Plain*, a large region including the Stormy Corner, but also parts of what is today Serbia and Romania. This study brings into systematic conversation with each other extensive and – within the region – comparative quantitative data on social and economic indicators and trends, as well as the analysis of the development of labour relations. The pervasiveness of sharecropping was connected to the scarcity of capital, even if at times wage labourers were hired even with the help of bank loans taken up for the purpose. The willingness of corn-growing sharecroppers to also commit themselves to work for very low wages for the landowner at harvest time was due to the lack of any alternative to subsistence on sharecropping. The layered competitive system of the lease-out of large plots of land to cash-rich capital owners had taken full root by the 1890s. While attracting peasant sub-contractors, this system also resulted in a reduced need for farm hands. The large section of the book discussing these developments is followed by an account which gives detailed information about labour conditions and wages, and ends with a few pages on housing conditions and cultural institutions.⁴³

Culture in a more elaborate sense emerged on the scene of analysing agrarian socialism in the form of one study deserving attention here, Péter Hanák's 'On the Mentality and the Symbols of the Agrarian-socialist Movements' published in 1988.⁴⁴ Only four years after the publication of this study, yet after the fall of state socialism, eminent social and cultural

historian Gábor Gyáni, who had been there in Orosháza in 1981, was the organizer of a section on 'peasant radicalism' at the conference of the new historians' organization named after István Hajnal, a historian persecuted in the early 1950s. The new historians met in Gyula, another town in the Stormy Corner. Gyáni in his contribution as published virtually lambasted all the historiography on agrarian socialism written under state socialism, exempting only Hanák's study just mentioned and one other study to a certain degree. A completely 'new approach' was needed. The agrarian-socialist movements had not been organized by a party standing above them; they were 'for the most part spontaneous mass actions' falling, in the vocabulary of Charles Tilly, in the category of reactive revolts. The old literature had 'painted a very poor picture of the full course of the local events', etc.⁴⁵

The Gyula conference, however, was one of the last occasions when any of the big names of the Hungarian historians' profession addressed agrarian socialism within a labour history framework in any substance. The cry for change turned out to signal the dying away of labour history old and new.

State socialism and beyond

The high-profile historians' conferences which took place in 1971 and 1981 in Békéscsaba and Orosháza, two towns located at the heart of the region labelled the Stormy Corner for its history of agrarian radicalism, signal the importance ascribed to the study of agrarian labour movements and agrarian labour under Hungarian state socialism. During these decades, the historians' profession in Hungary, when studying agrarian labour, could draw on generous resources and institutional backing as it built its research groups, presented its work and produced academic and more popular output. The overall expansion and institutional promotion during state socialism of research into the history of Hungary under capitalism was certainly conducive to this development. Growing from diverse institutional backgrounds and scholarly interests, the literature on agrarian labour and the agrarian labour movement developed side by side with a larger and more visible and possibly more coherent body of scholarship on industrial labour and those dominant sections and organizations of the labour movement involving industrial workers in the first place.

Hungarian historians in the period produced a large and varied body of knowledge about the history of agrarian labour as it can be broadly conceived, i.e. including all the varieties lingering between an agricultural way of life and various forms of proletarianization. The historiography of agrarian labour in greater Hungary written before 1989 constitutes one exemplary research cluster that might be considered relevant in terms of engaging regional traditions of labour history with the new global dialogue on labour history. The findings this research has handed down to us can certainly be read productively against the key debates in this new historiography, and new research might critically build on this corpus of largely forgotten studies.

The sustained interest of Hungarian historiography under state socialism in agrarian labour was propelled by a number of factors. In the most basic sense, this interest stemmed from the fact that agrarian labour was there. In the nineteenth and first half of the twentieth century, agrarian labour broadly conceived had persevered in being the dominant form of labour in Hungary, often associated with exploitation and misery. The fact that (some of) this labour had also been associated with both labour struggle and radicalism was important, yet cannot itself explain the interest in this large theme. Already by 1962 a solid empirical and

carefully argued social history of the *summás* workers in the middle of the nineteenth century had been published in *Történelmi Szemle*, one of the two key periodicals of the historical profession.⁴⁶ Péter Gunst in the late 1980s quoted the (in-)famous past characterization of Hungary as the country of the 'three million beggars', explicitly identifying this number with the smallholding and landless agrarian population and its economic marginalization and social exclusion in the interwar period.⁴⁷ However paradoxically it may strike some of us 'new' labour historians, the concept of the 'alliance of the workers and the peasants', one of the most schematic dogmas of Marxism-Leninism, was one important factor that enabled the unfolding of a broad and meticulous scholarship on all varieties of agrarian labour. The fact that the relevant authors regularly attached the label 'feudal remnant' to some forms of this labour, and the label 'transitional' to others – while keenly exploring the mix, interrelation, interaction and transition between all of these forms – in no way limited their curiosity and scholarly zeal.

A number of more particular circumstances can be considered to be key factors sustaining the interest in agrarian labour. First, the transition from feudalism to capitalism for a century had – all the on-going and neatly described change notwithstanding – constantly produced, reproduced and expanded all of these forms of labour. In other words, if these forms of labour as a mass phenomenon had simply persevered for a century after 1848, then they had to be studied, and formed a fascinating object of study. The fact that producing knowledge about them could also serve to underline the redemption finally brought about via and after the transition to state socialism was more important for some, and less important or irrelevant for other researchers, with some of the latter certainly not even subscribing to this notion. In any case, the knowledge thus generated and widely publicized may well have reverberated with the memory of the pre-war experience of large numbers of male and female agrarian workers, their families and their children and grandchildren.

Second, the interest in the overarching and long-term historical experience with agrarian labour was propelled by, and produced or advanced conceptual debate about, the nature of the Hungarian road to capitalism within an all-European framework. Leninist thinking about the roots and nature of revolution in Eastern as compared to Western Europe was only one source of and point of reference for these conceptual considerations and debates. Another one was the interest in developing conceptual tools that would enable scholarship to come to grips with the nature of the 'agrarian society' in the recent Hungarian past, with its peculiar characteristics, and in particular with its exclusion as a large 'block' of society from social recognition and social integration. After all, in Hungary, up until the present day, calling somebody a *paraszt*, i.e. a 'peasant', is one of the most serious offences and denigrations. During state socialism, interwar sociography was one important point of reference for the related conceptual debates. From the 1970s onwards, some of the conceptual interests mentioned so far were appropriated in some measure by those scholars who aimed to establish the concept of Hungary and other Central European countries as belonging to a third path of historical development in Europe. More often than not, this conceptual development was connected to the interest of removing Hungarian history and historiography from its association with Eastern Europe and Russia in particular. Taken together, these conceptual varieties should be read today as an important Eastern European contribution to the wide debate on historical repercussions in the world of work of uneven capitalist development, a debate that continues today, and informs at least some branches of new labour history.⁴⁸

A third factor feeding into the sustained research interest in agrarian labour (which in some measure again was connected but cannot be reduced to the sociographic tradition) was the identification with or interest in non-urban, peasantist ways of life, a world view which historically had involved both more plebeian and more status-conscious, 'conservative' varieties. Some of the historiography on the history of the peasantry discussed in this contribution closely built and expanded on this third motivation, yet under state socialism this research area also attracted many historians who were not connected to these traditions.

The knowledge on the history of agrarian labour which we have inherited from Hungarian historiography under state socialism was produced in response to these three factors and motivations and located at the intersection of three clusters of studies – peasant history, local history and the history of the labour movement. The three factors enabled the conceptual openness for the history of agrarian labour and contributed to its varied character. The strong presence of the historiography on agrarian labour in state-socialist Hungary thus cannot be explained via reference to the enabling ideological features of the state-socialist context alone. Rather, it was the engagement of historical research with the historical position of Hungary in the global geography of capitalism, and some of its consequences in terms of the history of labour, which propelled this knowledge production, and the relevant historical research in this way contributed to placing agrarian labour somewhat centre stage.

In the past few decades, however, the historiography discussed in this contribution has to a large extent fallen into oblivion. This undeniable fact is self-evidently related to a number of contextual developments. In Hungary, the 'systemic change' was accompanied by the abandonment of labour as the research theme most closely associated with the old regime during the 1990s and beyond. The economic and political marginalization of Eastern Europe within the international circuits of knowledge after 1989 added to this dynamic in a number of ways. The scholarship of Eastern European historians was harshly devalued in many cases, the material infrastructure and conditions for making their work visible internationally simply evaporated, and so on.

The history of the rise and fall of agrarian labour history in Hungary lends itself to comparative and integrative thinking about the fates and fortunes of labour history globally. I would argue that, as compared to Western developments, the state-socialist East developed earlier and in a more sustained manner an interest in more inclusive types of labour history, or at least associated a broader variety of historical study with the study of the history of labour. One might speculate, then, about the impact, within the global history of the Cold War, of the developments in Eastern Europe on labour history written elsewhere in the period. Later on, the fall of state socialism in Eastern Europe might well have contributed to or accelerated the demise of labour history in Western Europe since the 1980s. Comparing the developments in the Eastern and the Western halves of Europe and internationally during the decades following the Second World War might also bring to light the fact that labour historiography has been suffering in many senses from similar problems and limitations.

Like all historical research, Hungarian scholarship under state socialism on the history of agrarian labour carries, to various degrees and in a varied manner, the stamp of its context of origin. We should take cognizance of both the knowledge this scholarship produced as it asked some questions and not others, as well as some of the related conceptual debates on the history of labour in a less-favoured European and world region. If nothing else, this move might well help to produce what I consider a much needed modesty as to the concepts,

results and progress of the new global labour history. If we make productive use of the body of accumulated knowledge on the history of labour in Eastern Europe writ large produced during the twentieth century, we can enrich the new global labour history, rethink from a more critical perspective some of the global entanglements of knowledge production, and contribute to the emergence of alternative geopolitics of history writing.

Notes

1. Király underlines the presence of Hungarian non-*magyar* organizations at the congress. Király, “Áchim L. András, a demokratikus parasztpolitikus” [András L. Áchim, the Democratic peasant politician], esp. 70f.
2. This double volume was published, as were some other related works later, by the Agricultural and Forestry Workers’ Trade Union. Pölöskei and Szakács, *Földmunkás- és szegényiparászmozgalmak Magyarországon 1848–1948* [The movements of agrarian workers and poor peasants in Hungary 1848–1948].
3. The reprint was published as Féja, *Viharsarok* [Stormy Corner].
4. Pölöskei and Szabó, *Áchim L. András emlékkönyv 1871–1971* [András L. Áchim memorial book 1871–1971], esp. 11.
5. See the section on “Tasks and Recommendations” in his concluding contribution. Hanák, “Örökség és téma: az agrárszocializmus” [Heritage and theme: agrarian socialism], 206f.
6. In order to establish whether there were similar developments in terms of research on agrarian labour and the agrarian labour movement in other state-socialist countries, parallel historiographical explorations would need to be conducted. The reference here is to dominant trends in the historiography on labour in the West, in state-socialist Eastern Europe and internationally. For information on one extensive body of international publications on labour history in the period see “ITH Publications Collection.”
7. Gunst, *A magyar történetírás története* [Geschichte der ungarischen Geschichtsschreibung], 191.
8. See for instance Szabó, “A parasztság történelmének problematikája Magyarországon a kapitalizmus korában” [The problem of the history of the peasantry in Hungary in the epoch of capitalism]. This is a reprint of the study which originally appeared in *Századok* in 1961. Any inclusive review of Hungarian scholarship on the history of labour written under state socialism would need to include these two bodies of writing. A comparison with the phenomenon of Soviet and GDR ‘village literature’ could then round out our picture of how the historiography discussed here was situated within the historiography of labour in state-socialist Eastern Europe.
9. Some of the ‘modern classics’ of this literature are now assembled in Eckert, *Global Histories of Work*. “Scholarly Controversy: Defining Global Labour History”, is a useful introduction to the relevant debates.
10. Engels had already demanded in 1870 the integration of the agrarian proletariat into the socialist movement. Recently quoted in Kocka, *Arbeiterleben und Arbeiterkultur. Die Entstehung einer Klasse* [Workers’ life and workers’ culture: the formation of a class], 47.
11. Niederhauser, *A nagybirtok és a parasztság Kelet-Európában a polgári forradalmak után* [Large estates and the peasantry in Eastern Europe after the bourgeois revolutions].
12. Gunst gave this date in answer to the question ‘How did I become a historian?’, which had been addressed to many historians. Gunst, “Gunst Péter,” here 190.
13. Szabó, “A parasztság történelmének problematikája Magyarországon a kapitalizmus korában” [The problem of the history of the peasantry in Hungary in the epoch of capitalism], esp. 361.
14. Szabó, *A parasztság Magyarországon a kapitalizmus korában 1848–1914* [The peasantry in Hungary in the epoch of capitalism 1848–1914].
15. Szabó, “A parasztság történelmének problematikája Magyarországon a kapitalizmus korában” [The problem of the history of the peasantry in Hungary in the epoch of capitalism], 357f.

16. Szabó, “Bevezetés [Introduction];” I use the reprint, published as Szabó, *Jobbágyok-parasztok. Értekezések a magyar parasztság történetéből* [Serfs and peasants: treatises from the history of the Hungarian peasantry], here 369.
17. Szabó, “Parasztságunk a kapitalizmus korában” [Our peasantry in the epoch of capitalism], here 376.
18. Katona, “Átmeneti bér munkaformák” [Transitional forms of wage labour], here 384.
19. Sárközi, “A summások” [The summás workers].
20. In fact, this new labour legislation, as it attempted to differentiate clearly between ‘servants’ and other groups of agrarian workers, later on invoked, within the very legal language of the time, many of those categories and labels which structured agrarian labour relations as discussed in the historiography decades later. With a view to delimiting those workers defined as ‘agrarian servants’ from other groups of workers, Act 45 of 1907 pointed to those ‘who ... were contracted with daily payment or for a certain share (e.g. day labourers, workers hired for doing a certain portion of work, share croppers, etc.) as falling outside the definition of the agrarian servant [who was hired for at least one month]. “1907. évi XLV. törvénycikk a gazda és a gazdasági cseléd közötti jogviszony szabályozásáról [Act 45 of 1907 on the Regulation of the Legal Relationship between the Farmer and the Farm Servant].”
21. Katona, “Átmeneti bér munkaformák” [Transitional forms of wage labour], here especially 389, 420f., 425f.
22. Féja, *Viharsarok* [Stormy Corner], 6f.
23. After 1945 Erdei became a leading politician until 1956. After he took the side of those who wanted change at this point, he never again took on leading political positions, but became a leading specialist in agrarian studies and remained a well-received member of the intellectual (and political) elite. A detailed biography which stays close to the actual biographical data can be found in Kozák, “Névpont Databank.” Whenever possible I have used this most reliable databank in this study when giving biographical data.
24. Including all original quotes from Erdei, Zimmermann, “Ferenc Erdei und die Konzeptualisierung der ungarischen Gesellschaft in Europa” [Ferenc Erdei and the conceptualization of Hungarian society in the European context].
25. Gunst even claims that the famous study by Szűcs, *Vázlat Európa három történelmi régiójáról* [Outline on Europe’s three historical regions] (first published in *Történelmi Szemle* in 1981), was written as a consequence of his own first article published in this context in *Valóság* in 1974. Gunst also relates that a first enlarged version and translation of his 1974 study was published as Gunst, *Einige Probleme der wirtschaftlichen und sozialen Entwicklung Osteuropas* [Some problems of the economic and social development of Eastern Europe]; and that his Gunst, ‘Agrarian Systems of Central and Eastern Europe’ is a ‘much enlarged’ version of this study, ‘focusing mainly on the agrarian questions’. Gunst, “Gunst Péter.”
26. I use the 1991 German language edition here, Gunst, *Die bäuerliche Gesellschaft Ungarns in der Zeit zwischen den beiden Weltkriegen* [The peasant society of Hungary in the interwar period], esp. 15 and 246. The Hungarian edition was published under the same title as Gunst, *A paraszti társadalom Magyarországon a két világháború között* [The peasant society of Hungary in the interwar period]. I also use Gunst, “Szegényparasztság, agrárproletariátus Magyarországon (1919–1945)” [Poor peasantry and agrarian proletariat in Hungary (1919–1945)].
27. Gunst, *Die bäuerliche Gesellschaft Ungarns in der Zeit zwischen den beiden Weltkriegen* [The peasant society of Hungary in the interwar period], esp. 133–6; Gunst, “Szegényparasztság, agrárproletariátus Magyarországon (1919–1945)” [Poor peasantry and agrarian proletariat in Hungary (1919–1945)], esp. 124.
28. Gunst, “Szegényparasztság, agrárproletariátus Magyarországon (1919–1945)” [Poor peasantry and agrarian proletariat in Hungary (1919–1945)], 121.
29. Gunst, *Die bäuerliche Gesellschaft Ungarns in der Zeit zwischen den beiden Weltkriegen* [The peasant society of Hungary in the interwar period].
30. Gunst, *A magyar történetírás története* [The history of Hungarian historiography], 191–3.
31. I am grateful to Péter Kozák, who runs the Névpont databank mentioned above, and who, as we communicated while this study was in progress, has produced and shared the biography of

Mérey to which I refer here. The biography will become accessible through Kozák, “Névpont Databank.”

32. T. Mérey, “Miért vállaltak munkát a Trencsén megyei szlovák munkások Dél-Dunántúlon a századforduló idején?” [Why did Slovak workers from Trencsén County come to the Southern Transdanubian region to work here?]
33. Sági, “Az aratómunkások társadalmi és jogviszonyai Békés megyében a századforduló körül” [The social and legal conditions of the harvest workers in Békés county around the turn of the century]; Banner, “A békés megyei jobbágyság rétegződése a 18–19. században” [The stratification of bondservants in Békés County in the 18th and 19th centuries]. See also Kristó and Székely, *Tanulmányok Békéscsaba történetéből* [Studies in the history of Békéscsaba].
34. Simon, *A századforduló földmunkás- és szegényparaszt-mozgalmai 1891–1907* [The movements of the agrarian workers and poor peasants of the turn of the century 1891–1907]; Simon, *A munkás-paraszt szövetség kialakulásának kezdetei Magyarországon*. [The beginnings of the formation of the alliance of workers and peasants in Hungary], 3, 11, 14.
35. Orbán, “A magyar agrárkérdés a XX. században és Áchim L. András programja” [The Hungarian agrarian question and András L. Áchim’s programme].
36. Including Mérey, “Agrárszocialista mozgalmak Déldunántúlon 1905-ben” [Agrarian socialist movements in the Transdanubian Region]; Mérey, *A mezőgazdasági munkásság mozgalmai a Dunántúlon 1905–1907-ben* [The movements of the agrarian workforce in the Transdanubian Region 1905–1907].
37. Becsei, “Békéscsaba gazdasági és társadalmi struktúrája a XIX–XX. század fordulóján” [The economic and social structure of Békéscsaba at the turn of the 19th and 20th century], esp. 41.
38. Király, “Áchim L. András, a demokratikus parasztpolitikus” [András L. Áchim, the democratic peasant politician], esp. 70f.
39. Szabó, “A viarsarki agrárszocialista mozgalom előzményei” [The precursors of the agrarian-socialist movement in the Stormy Corner], esp. 65.
40. I am, again, grateful to Péter Kozák, who has shared with me his newly written biography of Virágh.
41. Virágh, *A Békés megyei szegényparasztság és a munkásság helyzete, küzdelme az ellenforradalmi korszakban 1919–1933* [The condition and the struggle of the small peasantry and the working class of Békés County in the counter-revolutionary period], 80f.
42. Ibid., 148.
43. Virágh, *A dél-alföldi radikális szegényparaszt-küzdelmek gazdasági-társadalmi háttere a századfordulón* [The social-economic background of the struggles of the radical small peasants of the southern Pannonian plain].
44. Hanák, *A kert és a műhely* [The garden and the workshop]; Engl. translation: Hanák, *The Garden and the Workshop: Essay on the Cultural History of Vienna and Budapest*.
45. Gyáni, “Nyugtalan századvég. Az agrárszocializmus új megközelítése” [Troubled end of the century: a new approach to agrarian socialism].
46. Pogány, “A kialakuló kubikosság munkaviszonyai” [The labour relations of the emerging strata of the “cubics”].
47. Gunst, “Szegényparasztság, agrárproletariátus Magyarországon (1919–1945)” [Poor peasantry and agrarian proletariat in Hungary (1919–1945)], 113, 126.
48. Zimmermann, “Eastern Europe.”

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