

# SOCIOGEOGRAPHICAL SURVEY OF THE AREA OF SCATTERED FARMS (TANYA) AROUND SZEGED

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Owing to economic and social development, the Hungarian system of scattered farms has changed considerably during the past decades with respect to the character of farming as well as the composition of their inhabitants. The change in the sociogeographical picture is especially apparent — as the example of Domaszék shows — in the case of those „tanya” settlements which are close to the town.

I selected 110 characteristic farms for my survey (this is 12% of the total number of peripheral settlements). Half of the questionnaires I used for the purposes of this survey were given to pupils of Domaszék primary school who live on these settlements. They took the sheets home with themselves, while I myself visited in the summer of 1984 the other 55 *tanya* in various other sections of the area. I wished to get an overall picture of the area of *tanya* by a comprehensive survey of such aspects as family-life, housing condition, farming, types of occupation and incomes, and education. In this sense my paper is also aimed to be a snapshot of this area.

## An outline of history

The Hungarian word *tanya* stands for a form of settlement in the Great Hungarian Plain (somewhat similar can also be found in other Eastern European countries) consisting of farmbuildings where usually agricultural population lives and which are at a considerable distance from each other and from the nearest town.

The word itself originates in the terminology of fishing, though its origin is still uncertain. It may be either a Nomadic inheritance or the result of the Turkish influence.

In modern times the conditions for settling on a *tanya* around Szeged were set in the first half of the 18th century, similarly to the country towns on the Great Hungarian Plain.

- a. With the settling of the possessory actions with the Cumanians in 1725 the characteristic outlines of the district of these settlements were formed.

- b. A zonal order became dominant on the „Szeged-land”, which remained in the possession of the town-authorities. (1. inner meadow-land rotation; 2. humus zone-arable land; 3. hay-field; 4. outer meadow waste zone)

The first wave of people moving out of the town settled on the hay-field zone, the first pieces of „living-lands” were formed here by way of free seizure or purchase. The first buildings were built on these complexly used private estates. The number of these dwelling-places increased towards the end of the 18th century due to the development of the vine and fruit cultivation on the sandy soil. At the same time, the area of extensive live-stock breeding moved gradually away from the town.

A new chapter began in the development of the *tanya* — settlements when the Szeged common pasture was leased out in 1852. The peopling of the farther districts began when the waste zone was fallowed for the first time, which was given an impulse by the destruction of Szeged by the Great Flood of 1879. The considerable distance from the town made it necessary, while the reasonable leasing possibilities made it possible to form permanent and complete settlements on the newly subdivided areas. It meant the end of the phenomenon of people having two homes (i.e. a different one in winter-time than during the summer), which had been so characteristic of *tanya* — dwellers on the Great Hungarian Plain. Thus Szeged became „the town with an overgrown tanya — system”.

The relation of the town and its surrounding areas changed after the Administrative reform 1949. Villages were assigned which contained these settlements. Thus the *tanya* around Szeged fell into the double attraction of their own regional centre on the one hand and that of Szeged on the other. Though the system of *tanya* is characterized by a decrease in the number of the population, and a change in its structural pattern and occupational composition, the dimensions of these changes have always been determined by the relation of Szeged and these settlements. (Fig.1.)

The first settlements in this area were formed on Domaszék, which is now the most densely populated village. Because of its being so close to Szeged, it was reached by each wave of people moving out of the town. There are 3161 people living here on its 5214 hectares (cc. 2000 acres), the number of the *tanya* is 950. (1984)

The assigning of the village centre was necessary mainly because of transport geographical reasons: this area was bordered by the local railway -line which worked from 1926 to 1976, and by the road number 55, halfway between Szeged and Mórahalom. This arbitrarily assigned village centre began to function effectively only in the 60's, as a result of the industrialization of Szeged (commuting) as well as the security of the local agricultural production (specialized cooperatives).

Though during the past 30 years the population of Domaszék has gradually decreased, the population of its centre, however, increased compared to this, probably as a result of the development of the public institution network. The change in the relation between the *tanya* and the village centre and Szeged is also indicated by the growing popularity of the hobby-gardens and week-end houses here.

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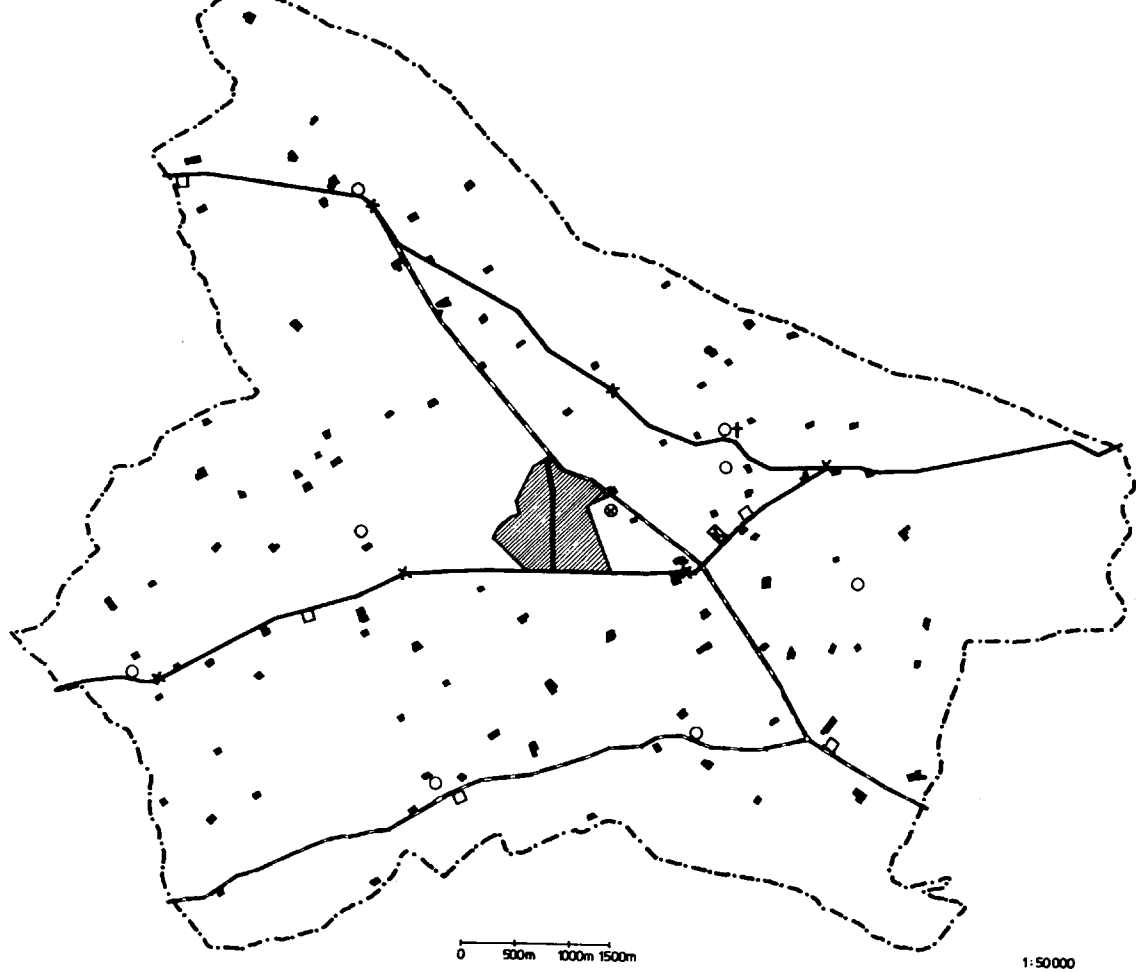


Fig. 1. The area of tanya (peripheral settlements) in Domaszék  
 1: road 2: railway 3: bus station 4: shop 5: school-building 6: house of culture 7: church  
 8: cemetery 9: researched tanya 10: the inside of Domaszék

### The composition of the population of the peripheral settlements

Both the „sunshiny houses” that still can be seen sometimes and some current family names here show that mainly families from Szeged-Alsóváros came to settle down on the Domaszék area.

The phenomenon of the small family is characteristic on this area (72.7%), though it is not rare that one of children stays with his old parents looking after them even after founding a family. I use the term „large family” here to indicate those families which consist of three generations (not the way they use it in ethnography). The parents-children-grandparents composition is not characteristic exclusively of the 30 large families, one or more of the generations are often incomplete. I would like to emphasize the following about the Domaszék small families:

1. small families proper are dominant.
2. the low proportion of lonely old people shows the existence of large families.

How many children are there in these families? Though the answers I got did not include the members of the families who moved from the *tanya*, one thing is sure: families with one or two children are the most frequent. (34.6% and 31.8%)

Now let's see the types of the households! The categories of the Central Statistical Office can be applied unambiguously in the case of the small families, but the large families consisting of two or more generations have to be dealt with separately. The possible combinations are shown on Fig.2. These figures give us a picture of a changing world of these settlements.

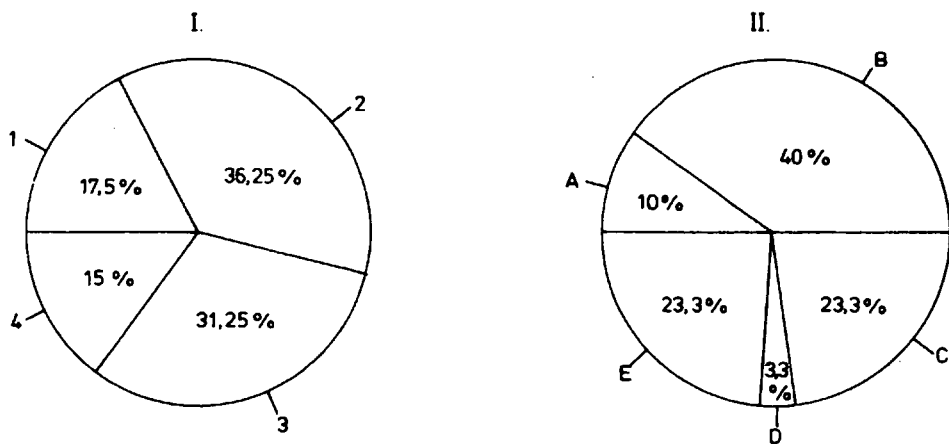


Fig. 2. The distribution of the types of households  
 I.: small families 1: industrial 2: agrarian 3: people with double incomes 4: intellectual  
 5: inactive  
 II.: large families A: industrial B: agrarian C: double incomes D: intellectual E: industrial/  
 double incomes

1. Agrarian households dominate though not exclusively, and the now inactive households had belong to this category almost without exception. The proportion of those who work in the industry is half of the agricultural workers, but they play an important role if we consider the double incomes.

2. In the large families the second generations show somewhat similar proportions on the whole, but the proportion of the inactive households is apparently higher in the case of these families. The intellectual type of the double household is exceptional among them. But let's see what proportions there are *within* the families.

There are 200 men and 205 women living on these peripheral settlements (110). The youngest (1 year old) and the oldest (83 year old) inhabitants of Domaszék are among the women. Looking at the age-tree of the inhabitants of these representative settlements (Fig.3) we can see a normal distribution. It is probably because of my method of collecting the data that the age-group of the 10 to 11 year old pupils and that of their parents, the 35 to 45 year old active workers are the most populous. The age groups of the 0 to 10, 20 to 30 and 50 to 55 year old people on the other hand are characterized by a decrease. (Demographical wavetrough)

According to the data of the birth registers, 84.9% of the dwellers of these settlements (344 people) were born in Szeged. (Unfortunately, it is entirely impossible to decide the proportion of births on the outskirts of Szeged compared to the central part of the town.) The rest, 61 people, were born in various nearby villages, only 2.7% of the total population were born outside Csongrád county. We can say that it is a really deep-rooted group of people, firmly fixed to this place. Their family

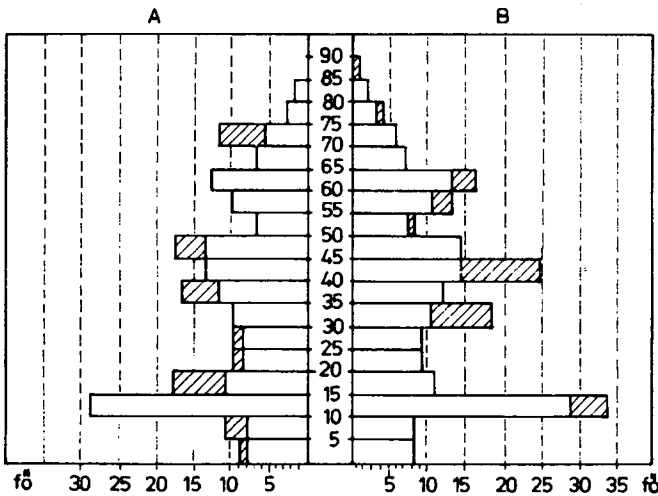


Fig. 3. The population of the tanya: sex and age (405 people)  
 A: man B: woman

connections are not far-reaching either, though many of the families may have relatives in several places. They have relatives in Domaszék mainly and in Szeged, which is not surprising if we know the data of the birth registers. The separation from the former and upper part of the village (Alsótanya and Felsőtanya) is indicated by the fact that only one of the families has relatives there. (Balástya)

It is worth analyzing the distribution of the educational level as a function of sex and age:

1. *People without any education*: 22 people, 0 to 6 year old children
2. *Pupils*: 72 people attending primary school 22 people attending secondary school (Most of the 11 boys are in vocational training, while most of the girls attend specialized secondary schools.)
3. *People who have already left school*: 287 people, a rather heterogeneous group, that can be subdivided according to the highest educational level of these people:
  - a. All of the women between 15 and 24 years (10) attended secondary school, while half of the men finished their studies with the primary school (20).
  - b. Theoretically everybody aged 25 to 56 must have attended the eight grades of primary school, yet 11.25% of the men (80), and 12.1% of the women (91) finished only 5,6 or 7 grades. There are more men with secondary education in this age-group, and the only graduate is also among them.
  - c. For people older than 56 years old, primary school had been 6 grades as basic educational level, and most of the 44 women have this. (90.1%) Though the men achieved this level only in a lower percentage (78.6%), there are several of them who also have secondary education.

The younger generation we look at, the lower the proportion of those who have only a primary educational level, and the higher the proportion of those, who also have secondary education. (It is especially obvious in the case of women: they have more possibilities to learn and their interest in it has increased, too.)

Now, let's see how the population of the *tanya* can be divided considering economic activities!

According to the data in Fig.3. there are more active wage-earners among the men, while more dependants among the women. It is because of the great number of those housewives who have no workplace and who contribute to the family income with their work in the household farming only. Another important thing to note is that there is a higher proportion of cooperative members among the wage-earner women than among the wage earner men, where the bigger proportion of the wage-earners are not cooperative members. It can be explained by the fact, that the women are more bound to their dwelling place by their families and by their work in the household farming than the more mobile men. (What is more, most men working in the industry are commuters.) The change in the types of occupations can also be seen in the difference between the generations: today's pensioners had been agricultural workers almost without exception.

The final aspect of paper concerns the<sup>1</sup> occupation index of active workers:

1. *Members of cooperative farms.* 92 people, 82 of them are members of the local cooperative „Szőlőfür” („bunch of grapes”), which does not mean that they are all agricultural workers, 28.6% of the men work as operators, bricklayers, locksmiths, while 18.4% of the women work in some workshop of the cooperative, such as a dressmakers' workshop.

2. (*Urban*) *Employees.* 60 men and 23 women. There is only an electrical engineer and a departmental manager representing the intelligentsia. The others are physical workers, 2/3 of them are skilled workers. The most favoured crafts include drivers, engine-fitters, bricklayers and lift-mechanicians. The proportion of skilled workers is lower among the women, they are mainly cooks, shop-assistants, spinners. 15 of them are unskilled workers, outside workers and clerks.

3. *Self-employed people.* There are only a few of them here, only 2.1% of the total number of the active wageearners. 2 of the 4 people are craftsmen, there is a shopkeeper and one of them is an agricultural producer.

### The characteristic features of farming

The best way to analyze the farming on the *tanya* is to look at the different sections of production separately.

*a* All the 110 families deal with some sort of plantcultivation on different scales but the differences can be really huge. We can find every level from the supplying of the household to a specialized good-production.

Vegetables are grown on every household farm. The high proportion of the growing of fodder-plants can be explained by the fact that, with the exception of one *tanya*, every family keeps poultry and other animals. The proportion of fruit-growing and vine-cultivation is lower than I expected (47.3% and 35.5%), even the corn-cultivation is more widespread. (61.8%) Two families have specialized in hothouse floriculture.

The distribution of crop-systems on the *tanya* is the following: the vegetable-crop-fodder three component variation is the most frequent. The fourth component is often vine or fruit-growing.

Self-sufficiency and good-production. 75 families (68.2%) produce more goods than their own needs in order to sell them regularly or occasionally. They sell mostly vegetables (green pepper, tomato, potato), fruits (peach, apple, grapes) and occasionally flowers. These *tanya* are so close to the the town that they necessarily play an important role — both directly and indirectly — in supplying Szeged with fruits and vegetables.

*b* Animal keeping on the *tanya*. What animals are there on these peripheral settlements? Everybody who can afford it breeds pigs, (89%) or at least keeps poultry. (88,1%) The proportion of those who breed cattle is about 50%. It is mainly the older generation who keeps horses (34.9%), while the keeping of sheep, pigeons or rabbits is insignificant. The combination of the poultry and pig-keeping is the

Table I.  
Household types

	SMALL FAMILIES			LARGE FAMILIES	
				2ND GENERATION	1ST GENERATION
1	industrial	THE CHARACTER OF THE HOUSEHOLDS	A	industrial	inactive
2	agrarian		B	agrarian	inactive
3	people with double incomes		C	double incomes	inactive
4	intellectual		D	intellectual	intellectual
5	inactive		E	industrial; double incomes	industrial/agrarian/ double incomes

most frequent. They are often connected with cattle-keeping or, more rarely, horse-breeding.

Only 1/5 of the 109 families keep animals for their own needs. Most of those who keep animals had made a contract with the cooperative (68), and only 7 of them sell the animals themselves, while the other families use both possibilities.

People having small „week-end” gardens here find it comfortable to buy milk and eggs from the *tanya*-dwellers thus initiating a new type of consumer — producer relationship.

It is really difficult to get a genuine picture of the incomes of the dwellers of these settlements, using the data I have got, mainly because of the incomes of the cooperative members who work on their „own piece of land”, and do not get a regular pay, and the work that is their main occupation is only a secondary source of income for many of the pensioners and for those who are employed in the industry. No wonder they told me: „One thing brings it, the other takes it.” (i.e. the money) We have already discussed what „brings it”. But what takes the money? 3/4 of the *tanya*-dwelling families spend most of their money on food, which shows the end of the complete self-sufficiency. Household farming needs permanent investment, which takes money, too. The fixing and renewing of the agricultural equipment, the insecticides, chemical fertilizers, the hothouse equipment cost a considerable sum of money in 50% of the families. They also spend a lot of money on having the digging



Table 2.  
The distribution of the tanya-dwelling population (405) people, by their occupations.  
(The numbers appearing in boldface indicate the members of the cooperatives)

		MALES	%	FEMALES	%	TOTAL	%
INACTIVE PEOPLE	ACTIVE WAGE-EARNERS	63 + <b>46</b> = 109	54,5	25 + <b>55</b> = 80	39,0	189	46,7
	pensioners	2 + <b>27</b> = 29	14,5	2 + <b>28</b> = 30	14,6	59	14,6
	disability	1 + <b>1</b> = 2	1,0	1 + <b>1</b> = 2	1,0	4	1,0
	soldiers/mothers at home with their children on an allowance	1	0,5	4 + <b>2</b> =	2,9	7	1,7
I	together	3 + <b>29</b> = 32	16,0	7 + <b>31</b> = 38	18,5	70	17,3
DEPENDANTS	children aged 0 to 6	11	5,5	11	5,4	22	5,4
	pupils aged 6 to 14	34	18,0	36	17,6	72	17,8
	secondary school pupils	11	5,5	13	6,3	24	5,9
	housewives/household workers	1	0,5	27	13,2	28	6,9
D	together	59	29,5	87	42,5	146	36,0

done, on seed-corn and on fodder. The younger generation spends more money on clothes, furniture and household equipments and house-building than the older people.

### What are the prospects for Domaszék?

„Youthful” age-structure, considerable commuting, good indexes for equipment and supply, agricultural good production — these are the most important expressions to characterize the area of *tanya* in Domaszék.

The observations made during the sociogeographical survey of 110 such settlements are the following:

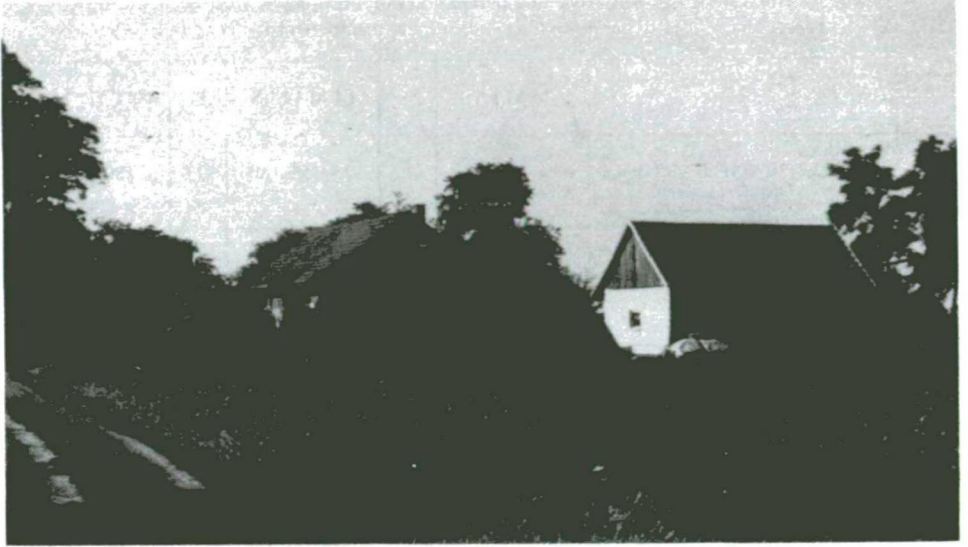


Photo 1. One of the 950s — the view of a typical „tanya” around Domaszék

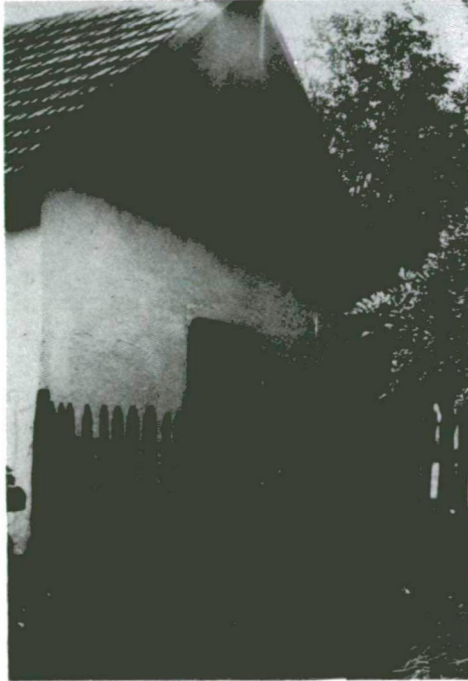


Photo 2. Sunshide — the ornament on the end of the house shows an old tradition in Szeged



Photo 3. In a hobby-garden

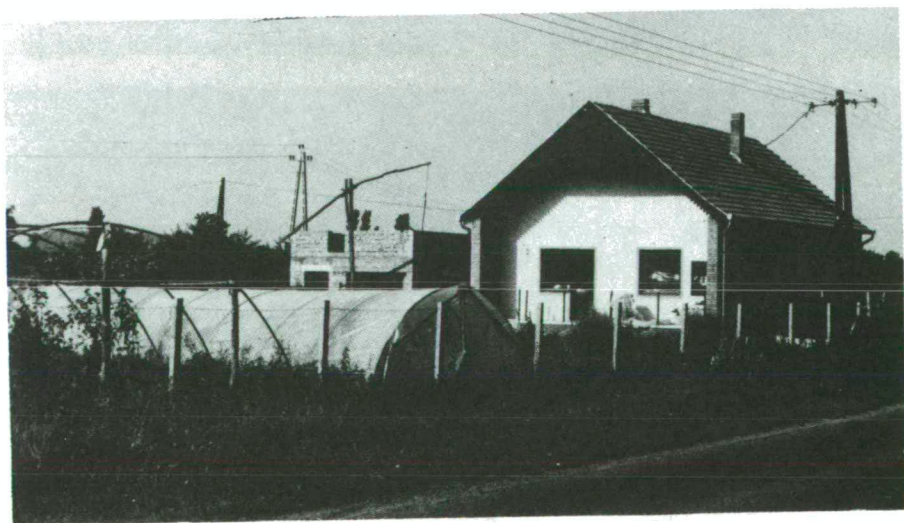


Photo 4. Renewal — the future belongs to the „tanya” the road

1. The attraction of the intensively developing and advantageously situated village centre is increasing.

2. Though the original area of the *tanya* is practically perishing, it happens only at a relatively slow pace, and on a different scale in different areas. Though this process is still to be revealed with the separation of the types of areas and with the investigation of the lives of the different people, one thing can be said as a conclusion: the Mórahalom area which had been deprived of its local railway-line and is inhabited mostly by old people, has entirely different perspectives for the future, than these settlements, which are situated by the road.

3. The phenomena indicating the change, such as the revival of the „two homed family” (the practice of working on one’s own farm besides being employed somewhere), the hobby-gardens, and the renewal of the *tanya* by the road, counterbalance the perishing of the world of *tanya*.