

Collectivization and Social Change in Communist Romania

Introduction

Until the middle of the twentieth century, Romanian society was basically rural. According to the official census in 1948, around 75 percent of the population was living in villages.¹ As the rural area was perceived as a backward element of Romanian society, the discourse and politics related to it were closely connected to the issue of modernization.

The discussion about the underdevelopment of the rural areas started in the middle of the nineteenth century, with some of the revolutionaries from 1848 including elements regarding the improvement of the peasants' situation in their programs and occasionally even suggesting the distribution of land.² Throughout the twentieth century the problem of backwardness in the rural area became more important, and different governments applied specific solutions. In 1921 and 1945, agricultural land was distributed to the peasants in an attempt to solve the problem of poverty and in order to raise agricultural productivity. After World War II, the Communist regime succeeded in placing the land under direct state control through collectivization. The reinstatement of property rights (together with a limited land redistribution)³ followed in the 1990s.

In this paper I will focus on how collectivization changed social relations in rural areas. The starting assumption of my article is that violence and repression should not be the key elements in analyzing this process. Such a statement may seem strange, especially when talking about Communism, a political regime which viewed the use of repressive force as an acceptable element of government action.

Instead, I consider two different levels in discussing the events. The first is the ethical dimension, based upon which the repression is not to be analyzed only by taking statistics about it into consideration. Hence, it is not important how many people were affected by state-sponsored arbitrary actions, but rather the very existence thereof, as well as the lack of freedom as a result of repression. Yet, aside this 'politically correct' perspective, there is an 'emic'⁴ one, focusing on how the people interpret violence and repression. From this point of view, some degree of force could be considered acceptable, as linked with a certain tradition of violence and lack of modern notions such as democracy, free will, liberty etc., a situation that was typical of Romanian rural areas at the time. Perhaps the Communist repression was new for the Romanian interwar elites (who were actually the social category who suffered most because of it), but in the villages violence was not discovered by party secretaries, as, for example, large scale violence had been used to suppress the peasant uprising of 1907, and administrative abuses are recorded in interwar literature and press.⁵

It is also to be asked to which extent the Communist Party itself was ready to use violence against the peasants. Despite the official ideology underlining the importance of the

‘working class’, this group at the time represented only a small fraction of the Romanian population and the party was actually obliged to rely on the peasants for political support.⁶ This was true especially at a moment when its membership numbers swelled from around 1,000 in the interwar period to 710,000 in 1947⁷ (see Appendix 1). These circumstances would explain the restraint of Communist officials to speak openly about collectivization before 1949 and would also raise some questions about the party’s willingness to use high-scale violence in rural areas.

Actually, according to some authors, the use of violence in the Communist period was solely a complementary element of the party’s overall strategy (and not its general strategy). This opinion is shared by the Romanian historian and political scientist Daniel Barbu who, in an interesting essay about the myth of violence in Communist Romania, concludes that at the most 8 percent of Romanians were affected (directly or indirectly) by repression between 1945 and 1967.⁸ Other authors noticed the overall poor situation of the interwar Romanian economy and the low living standards compared even with the neighbouring countries in the Balkan area.⁹ This would lead to some interesting questions about how economic growth in the first years of the Communist regime was perceived by the average Romanian and what role it played in the possible acceptance of the regime.

The use of violence as a general strategy is also questioned by different case studies about the Romanian villages during collectivization which tend to actually prove the ‘minimum usage of symbolic violence’, to quote the social anthropologist Katherine Verdery, studying the collectivization in the Transylvanian village of Biñiñi (today called Aurel Vlaicu).¹⁰ The party strategy seems to have focused rather on the symbolic destruction of local elites, considered the more likely opposition to its politics, rather than in attacking the whole village community. With some notable exceptions, where open rebellions were crushed by Securitate troops, the collectivization took the form of a dangerous game, with violence as a hidden threat, but rarely employed openly.

A difficult start

In the first years after World War II, the Communist party refused to openly discuss about the collectivization of agriculture. In March 1948, for example, at a meeting with party activists, Teohari Georgescu, Minister of the Interior, expressed concern about rumours regarding the creation of collective farms, which he considered to be dangerous due to their potential to lead to unrest among the peasants.¹¹

Debates were finally provoked by a Cominform resolution issued in June 1948. Against the background of political conflict between the Soviet Union and Yugoslavia, the resolution condemned the overall politics of the Yugoslav Communist Party. Regarding the peasantry, the conclusion was clear:

‘The experience of the Communist (Bolshevik) Party of the Soviet Union proves that the liquidation of the last and most numerous exploiting class – that of the *chiaburi* [the Romanian term for “kulak”] – is possible only through the mass collectivization of agriculture and that liquidation of the *chiaburi* as a class is an organic component of the collectivization of agriculture’.¹² This was an indirect way of imposing not only

collectivization as a task upon the Eastern European Communist Parties, but also the strategy to be used: the class struggle.

Class struggle was in theory a reasonable strategy. It implied the recruitment of the poor peasantry against the so called *chiaburi*, an indefinite category of rich peasants considered to be the worst enemies of Communism and collectivization alike. As proved by the growing number of party members, the poor peasants were actually ready to become party members and to use the advantages resulting from this position. Yet, they hardly shared their vision and long-term objectives and this made them difficult to control. These facts were known to the high-ranking Communist officials who, beginning with 1948, tried to regain control over the party organizations, by cleansing it of the new insubordinate members. Between 1948 and 1955 around 465,000 of the new members, representing 45 percent of the total number, were expelled from the party¹³ (see also Appendix 2). Hence, as collectivization implied a radical transformation of the rural areas, it was posing serious problems to a party passing through a period of reorganization and which was unable to fully trust its local organizations.

A first discussion about the new resolution took place during a Political Bureau meeting in July 1948. Some members explicitly opposed collectivization, such as the Deputy Prime Minister Chivu Stoica, who proposed the text not even to be published in *Scântea*, the party's official newspaper.¹⁴ Gheorghe Gheorghiu-Dej, the party secretary, backed by some others, defined around 60 to 70 percent of the peasants as 'bourgeois elements,' highly influenced by old mentalities and offered to prepare a paper on collectivization.¹⁵ Yet even he was aware of the political and social implications and viewed it as a long-term process, emphasizing the persuasion of peasants through propaganda rather than the use of open violence.

In February 1949, the documentation which Gheorghiu-Dej had offered to present had been finalized.¹⁶ His report started by reviewing the social configuration of the peasantry and underling the predominance of the poor peasants, i.e. those who owned up to 3 hectares of land (53.2 percent of the rural population). The average ones (between 3 and 10 hectares) represented 40.7 percent and finally, the *chiaburi*, and the great owners holding up to 50 hectares after the 1945 land expropriation, counted for the rest of 6.1 percent. While the statistical sources used by Gheorghiu-Dej are not very clear, the data resulting from the official census from January 1948 (see Appendix 3) reflect Romanian agriculture's main problem being the lack of land rather than its distribution. The party secretary was aware of this situation and, quoting Stalin, identified two possibilities of solving it: either the capitalist one, of concentrating rural property in private hands, or the Communist one, consisting of uniting small and average-sized property in larger collective farms. The last solution was, of course, preferred, based on the strategy of class struggle, by using the agricultural proletariat (the peasants without land) as the 'main force of class struggle in the countryside', together with the average peasantry against the *chiaburi*.¹⁷

The limits of class struggle were obvious even to the party secretary. It was efficient, combined with discriminatory fiscal politics, in fighting against the *chiaburi*, but not in convincing the peasants to join their own land in collective farms. These were to be created only with the approval of the central administration (either the government or the Party Central Committee) in areas with specific (although undefined) 'proper conditions'.

The major role in collectivization was actually to be played by other forms of socialist structures. The most important were perhaps the Stations for Machines and Tractors

(SMT), introducing modern technology to rural areas and working preferentially on the land of collective farms or of other kinds of associations. An important role was also played by village cooperatives (which replaced the stores distributing industrial products and hence increasing party control over the rural area), local party organizations, and state farms as models for modern land working.

Dej's document was first discussed at a Political Bureau meeting held between February 15 and February 17, 1949. Some of the members, among them Ana Pauker, number two in the party hierarchy, considered the paper provided for a massive collectivization, which she deemed as dangerous at that moment¹⁸, while others such as Vasile Luca, Minister of Finance, noted that the *chiaburi* were the main agricultural producers and hence the most important tax payers in the rural area and therefore 'class struggle' could lead to economic problems.¹⁹

The discussions during the Party Central Committee Plenum in March 1949 had an even worse tone.²⁰ Most of the speakers underlined the difficulty of collectivization, due to the traditional social relations in the rural areas, the importance of the peasantry in Romanian society and the economic implications of destroying the *chiaburi*, actually the main agricultural producers. Many noticed that the socialist sector was not at all prepared to sustain collectivization: the state farms were not economically viable and the SMT were still unorganized and lacked party organizations. Constantin Pârvulescu, a veteran Communist, drew attention to the lack of reliable party members in the villages and the necessity of cleansing the disobedient members from local party organizations.

At the end of the session, even Gheorghiu-Dej accepted that 'we are not talking about a mass collectivization here'. The most important goal was actually the fight against the *chiaburi*, who had no chance to integrate into the new socialist order by joining the Collective Agricultural Farms (*Gospodării Agricole Colective*, GAC). Ana Pauker, who advocated the creation of a small number of collective farms under the supervision of the Party Central Committee and state authorities, was to be in charge of the collectivization process.

Even the conclusions of the session, or, as they were officially named, the 'actions planned for bringing to reality the decision of the Plenum' focused on strengthening the party's position in the rural area rather than on real collectivization. Only paragraph IV stipulated 'preparatory measures' for creating collective farms.²¹ The same ideas were carried on in a resolution published in *Scântea*, on March 15, 1949.²²

Class struggle and chaos in the rural area (1949–1953)

In its first stage the collectivization process took on a chaotic form, reflecting on the one hand the different visions among the high-ranking party officials and on the other hand the indecisiveness of the local party organizations. Gheorghiu-Dej, partially under the pressure of soviet advisors, was in favour of a rapid process and of the delegation of the responsibility to local party structures. Ana Pauker tried to maintain the central control over collectivization, and allowed only a small number of collective farms to be founded. This situation, lasting until the spring of 1952, when Pauker and some of her collaborators were accused of deviationism and eliminated from the party, is reflected in the discrepancies between the numbers of collective farms established each year (see Appendix 4).

Symptomatic for the party's reluctance to use repression is the fact that until 1957 the peasants opposing the collectivization were convicted based on the decree 183/1949, for not accomplishing the production plan or obstructing the gathering (*colectare*) process. Only after 1957 they were accused based on the 209 article of Criminal Code, for propaganda and agitation against the social order.²³ Under these circumstances, the local agents of the party used different 'persuasion' means, ranging from threatening with the deportation to Siberia, short period of arrest for different pretexts, such as unleashed dogs, or convocations for discussions at the local mayor's office, when direct violence (beatings) was sometimes used. The political police (*Securitate*) was mostly not directly involved in the process, aside the regions where the opposition took the form of direct mutinies, but was often used as a threat by the local party officials. The local organizations were also under pressure as the party itself was passing through a period of political purges and every member feared to lose his or her position, a situation encouraging the using of repression at the local level.

The hesitant strategy of the party was also reflected in its attitude towards the *chiaburi*. In 1949, despite the official position of Gheorghiu-Dej, it was still possible for them to donate some land to the state farms, while a year later this was no longer possible and their land was to be confiscated and used for the creation of the collective farms.

The new collective farms also represented a problem. An article published in November 1949 in *Lupta de Clasă* (The Class Struggle), the party's official ideological publication, sharply criticised their functioning. The article appeared at a time when the local proposals were still carefully selected by an Agrarian Commission under the leadership of Ana Pauker. According to the article, the *chiaburi* were of course to blame, but also the peasants in general, because of the 'backward mentality, selfishness of private property, and lack of belief in the invincible force of the cooperation between the working people'.²⁴

Actually, since the new collective farms did not include all the peasants in a village, the new collectivists were mostly members of the administration or party organizations, usually paid as bureaucrats and hence unable or unwilling to work on the field. In most cases, the bureaucrats and the poor peasants were the most likely to join the 'socialist system', but they did not have much land or agricultural inventory to bring in, so the new collective farms were rather inefficient.²⁵

To make things even more complicated, some other forms of associations were proposed to the peasants. The 'Land Working Associations' (*Întovărășiri agricole de tip sovietic*, TOZ), were actually considered inferior to the collective farms, as the peasants remained the owners of the land. They were founded mostly before 1949, as a form of working the land with the new technology of the SMTs. In 1952, when even for Gheorghiu-Dej it was obvious that collectivization would be a long process, the party used the TOZ as a replacement for the collective farms (see Appendix 5).

The *chiaburi* also caused problems. They had enjoyed high prestige in the villages, developing complicated kinship (real or fictive) and clientele networks. It is reasonable to assume that the wealthier families consisted of more members due to the better living conditions (related to nutrition and to the possibility to access, up to some extent, medical care, leading to a smaller probability of infant mortality), and hence the tendency to back up each other in the face of the party's assault. The fictive kinship relations (the godfather institution for example), were also dependent on some 'ceremonial expenses'²⁶ and their development was closely linked to family wealth.

More often the *chiaburi* were more educated than the average peasants, due to the possibility to follow other forms of schooling after primary education or simply because, living in wealthier families, they were to some extent relieved from the field work during their childhood and school time. Their membership in the collective farms would have improved the overall organization through their management skills and would have acted as an example, softening other peasants' resistance. Unfortunately, the *chiaburi* were not allowed to become members in collective farms and this split the villages in two groups: the collectivists and the others, and, as the collective farms were far from being an example of viable economic enterprises, most of the peasants preferred to stay away from them.

Strengthening the socialist sector (1953–1955)

The first stage of collectivization continued until the summer of 1953. The death of Stalin in March 1953 was perhaps one of the reasons for criticizing the way in which collectivization was carried out during a Party Central Committee Plenum in August 1953; but two other elements were especially emphasized during discussions: first, there was the general unsatisfactory situation of the socialist sector in agriculture. Both the individual activities and collective farms had been affected by the party's policy to invest heavily in the development of industry, as admitted by a Plenum communiqué.²⁷ Actually most of the investments in agriculture were absorbed by the state sector (SMTs and State Farms) (see Appendix 6). The socialist system suffered heavy criticism in all respects: The collective farms were considered insufficiently developed, the State Farms too extended and disorganized, the SMTs inefficient due to the shortage of agricultural machines. As underlined by different speakers, the lack of reliable staff in the rural area also remained an unsolved problem.

Under these circumstances, the Plenum decided to raise the investments in agriculture and to sustain private farming through credits, higher acquisition prices and tax reductions. The Plenum also condemned the attacks against the *chiaburi* (blaming Ana Pauker's faction for them) for being unreasonable and leading to unrest in the rural areas.²⁸ As some of the speakers noticed, there were also situations in which the *chiaburi* refused to work the land because of the high taxes. The Plenum decided that they should be subject to certain containment but not to destruction (*deschiaburire*), because of the resulting economic problems.²⁹ The *deschiaburire* process was to be implemented in the long term, through 'legitimate quotas', not exceeding 50 percent of the surplus of the production.

Overall these decisions meant renouncing the rapid collectivization through 'class struggle'. Yet, they did not mean that the party had given up its long term objective. As one can see in Appendix 6, the planned investments in the collective farms in 1955 were to be equal with the ones for private households, the latter being actually more numerous in Romanian agriculture. The party's policy seems to have shifted from creating new collective farms to strengthening the existing ones, and thus turning them into better propagandistic tools.³⁰

This second stage lasted until the end of 1955 with collective farms being strengthened while the private ones were spared.³¹ Meanwhile, some other factors contributed to the destruction of traditional social relations in the rural area, which were in fact the main source of resistance to the collectivization.

A central problem discussed both in 1949 and 1953 was the problem of party and administration staff. The lack of competent and reliable personnel was signalled by different speakers and the need to improve this aspect appeared in the conclusion of both meetings. The new specialists were a necessity in the attempt to modernize the rural areas so, during the 1950s they became a significant presence in the villages, and took their place in local society by replacing to some extent the old local elites, whose position had been based on property ownership.³² Actually this new hierarchy, based on the wage level and political or administrative positions, was constructed and strictly controlled by the party since often, in occupying a position, obedience came before professionalism.

It seems logical to assume that, especially during the process of strengthening the collective farms, these new party-controlled structures attracted more and more peasants and helped the political power in better controlling the rural areas. The growth of rural bureaucracy (both administrative and political), accelerated after 1955, when the party purge had finished and the numbers of local officials rose by more than 50 percent, from 538,815 to 807,140 in 1960 (see again Appendix 2).

'Bureaucratization' was also closely linked to the expansion of education. On the one hand, the party educational system emphasized the political training in the forming of party officials, while on the other hand, the existing pre-war higher education system was expanded and different forms of financial aid were made available for the poor students. As a result, between 1949 and 1950 the party system classes were attended by 249,125 students³³ and the overall number of university students in Romania grew from 26,500 in 1938 to 115,600 in 1956.³⁴ Of course, the efficiency of this expanding education system is questionable, but it is certain that the diplomas offered their possessors a real possibility of social ascension. Yet, higher education, especially at the university level, was conditioned by obedience to party politics and hence, in this particular case, by the attitude towards collectivization.³⁵

Finally, a last element that is sometimes underestimated as a tool of persuasion is urban migration. When the peasantry is dominant in a society, not only the distribution of the land is important but also the possibility to cut the demographic pressure in rural areas by offering individuals the possibility to migrate to the cities and find an occupation in the non-agricultural sectors. The period between in 1948 and 1966 was characterized by a very high rural to urban migration rate, perhaps the highest in the history of Romania (see Appendix 7). By taking into account that in 1965 the normal income of a person working in agriculture was half of the national average,³⁶ the wish of the peasants to migrate to the cities is understandable. Moreover, as usually the migration tends to be a selective process, one can say that the most young and dynamic peasants, probably the main opposition to the collectivization, left the villages.

Overall even the living conditions in the villages improved during this second stage, both for the collectivist peasants and individual landowners, as the total agricultural production reached once again the levels achieved in 1938, although with important yearly fluctuations (1938: 100 percent, 1953: 101.2 percent, 1954: 97.8 percent, 1955: 118.8 percent, 1956: 88.6 percent).³⁷ Yet the professionalized staff problem was far from being solved. In 1954, a party official admitted during a meeting that sometimes not even the party members knew what a working association really is.³⁸ In the same year, during a session of the Political Bureau, one of the speakers made the shocking assertion that at the Popular Councils the basic administrative structures of the period, equivalent with the 'local

councils' in interwar and today Romania, 'the agronomic agents are illiterate in a proportion of 50 percent'.³⁹

Using the administration (1956–1962)

The resumption of collectivization was decided during the Second Congress of the Romanian Workers' Party in December 1955. According to a report presented by Gheorghiu-Dej, the socialist sector in agriculture comprised 26.5 percent of the total arable land and the party's position in rural areas was strong enough to finally begin mass collectivization.⁴⁰

A report presented by Alexandru Moghioroş during a Political Bureau meeting in August 1956 detailed the strategy to be applied. Accordingly, until 1960 the socialist sector in agriculture was to produce around 60 to 70 percent of the total production, mentioning that at the moment of the Plenum 76.1 percent of the total production was still being achieved by the private sector.⁴¹ Yet now the notion of 'socialist sector' was somehow enlarged, by including other forms of association, such as the land working associations, with the possibility for them to be later turned into Collective Agricultural Farms. Some concessions were also made to the peasants, as the ones who joining the collective farms would receive some compensation for their animals, the right to keep the house plot in private property and to use a small area of land every year.

Through its attitude towards the *chiaburi* the party totally dropped the class struggle strategy. The report noticed their tendency to renounce the land and allowed them to join the collective farms in villages with predominant socialized agriculture.⁴² The main force of collectivization was to be the average peasant, hence the need to find methods to strengthen this group from the material point of view. Some other problems had remained unchanged since 1953, such as the necessity to train party staff and to improve the situation of collective farms.

Giving up the class struggle ideal meant also to renounce to the egalitarian idea. As the purges ended in 1955, the party ranks were now open even to the *chiaburi*, who brought their expertise in the collective farm management, gaining important positions at the local level. The bureaucracy developed through the collectivization, which was in fact a way of establishing new hierarchies in the villages, was less important in the 'class struggle' phase of the beginning of the 50s, but it was definitely very important in the end stages. The first collective farms might have been established by the poor peasants more ready to adhere to an egalitarian ideal, but the later joining average peasants and *chiaburi* regarded this concept with mistrust. Meanwhile, the process was placed more and more under state control, a course of action emphasizing the formal hierarchical structures rather than the collective decision of the collective farms' assemblies.

As the party totally dropped the class struggle idea, the change in attitude towards the *chiaburi* and 'average peasants' was completed with a change in the approach towards convincing them to join the collective farms. The administrative structures played an important role during this last stage. The State Committee of the Agricultural Products Gathering (*Comitetul de Stat al Colectării Produselor agricole*), enacted from 1950, was transformed in 1955 into the Ministry of Gatherings (*Ministerul Colectărilor*) and functioned until 1957, playing an important role in the last stage of collectivization. In January 1956 two separate

Ministries of Forestry and State Farms were established, a decision which allowed the Ministry of Agriculture to concentrate almost exclusively on collectivization, taking over the attributions of Ministry of Gatherings beginning with 1957.⁴³

The main persuasion tools were the agricultural quotas, the collection of which had been improved through the enforcement of the administration. Actually, the whole socialist system was much better organized and this also can be seen by regarding the development of specific legislation. In 1949 the collectivization was regulated through a short legislative text, the decree 319/1949, containing only two articles. It approved the enacting of new collective farms, through Government decisions, at the proposal of the Ministry of Agriculture.⁴⁴ A model statute for collective farms was proposed, but it was published only in June 1953.⁴⁵ For the other type of associations, the so called TOZ, the first statute was published in 1952.⁴⁶ Yet, the situation of the new associative organizations was clarified only in decree 31/1954, when they were recognized as socialist economic organizations. Because of this it was possible, by using different legal tricks such as the 'merger' of different associative juridical persons, to turn the 'inferior' working associations into 'superior' collective farms. In September 1956, a model statute of an Agricultural Cooperative of Production, was published, although it was still unapproved by the Council of Ministers. This new juridical form of organization was an intermediate form between the collective farms and the associations for working the land. It provided for the peasants to remain the owners of the land, although they had only a right of 'nude property', without any other ownership attributes such as the right of land usage. As the peasants were actually land owners, it was possible for the associations for working the land to be turned into cooperative of production and, according to the 1965 Constitution these became the only form of collective farms legally recognized.⁴⁷

The existence of a complex legislation regulating the process proves a professionalization of the administration in rural areas, acquired both through the training of the older party staff and through the acceptance of more educated *chiaburi*. Allowing their joining of the collective farms gave them the possibility of occupying important positions in the administrative and even party structures. As it was easier for them to join the administration rather than the party, the role assigned to administration seems to indicate that actually the *chiaburi* skills were used during this last stage of collectivisation.

As different positions became available for everybody accepting the new regime, more peasants tried to take advantage of them. However, the process tended to produce its own fuel, as the few peasants left outside the 'socialist sector', were actually an easy target for harassment by the authorities, from the changing of plots through land mergers to different forms of discrimination, such as in the area of education, in a rural world more and more dependent on the state.

Conclusion

The collectivization of agriculture was decided outside Romania and the local Communist Party was not prepared for its implementation. Between 1949 and 1953 the latter applied the class struggle strategy, in an attempt to use the poor peasants as its agents in the rural area. The differences of vision among the high-ranking party officials and the difficulty

to control the 'class struggle' led to the abandonment of this strategy in 1953. An interval of several years was used to consolidate the local political and administrative structures which became more efficient and capable of being used as propagandistic tools. Thus, the party managed to slowly control the rural social hierarchy and became the main distributor of social positions in the villages.

The new social structures eventually replaced the old ones, based on land ownership. Some other elements contributed to this process, such as the migration to urban areas or the improvement of peasants' living standards. Although the repression was used directly in certain moments and remained a threat during the whole period, it was neither the only nor the most important factor that brought the peasants into the collective farms.

However, it is difficult to consider the collectivization of agriculture a success. The party reached its objectives of creating collective farms and controlling agriculture. However, the egalitarian project was not accomplished since rural society remained strongly differentiated and the old elites from the interwar period managed to keep their positions, at least to some extent.

Appendix 1: Growth of the Communist Parties in Eastern Europe after WWII⁴⁸

country	before WWII	1947	growth
Romania	1,000	710,000	710 times
Hungary	30,000	750,000	25 times
Czechoslovakia	80,000	1,300,000	16,2 times
Poland	20,000	800,000	40 times
Yugoslavia	15,000	400,000	26,6 times
Bulgaria	8,000	510,000	83,7 times

Appendix 2: Evolution of Romanian Communist Party membership during the Communist regime⁴⁹

congresses/conferences	date	membership numbers
National Conference	October 1945	256,863
1 st Congress of the Romanian Workers Party ⁵⁰	February 1948	1,057,428
2 nd Congress of the Romanian Workers Party	December 1955	538,815
3 rd Congress of the Romanian Workers Party	June 1960	807,140
9 th Congress of the Romanian Communist Party	July 1965	1,411,066
10 th Congress of the Romanian Communist Party	August 1969	1,915,232

11 th Congress of the Romanian Communist Party	November 1974	2,462,380
12 th Congress of the Romanian Communist Party	November 1979	2,980,970
13 th Congress of the Romanian Communist Party	November 1984	3,440,000
14 th Congress of the Romanian Communist Party	November 1989	3,824,782

Appendix 3: Land distribution in Romania before collectivization, according to the national census from January 1948⁵¹

Agrarian property

class	area (ha)	amount (%)
1	< 0,5	16.40
2	0,5–1	20.00
3	1–2	26.80
4	2–3	12.70
5	3–5	6.60
6	5–10	1.60
7	10–50	0.70

Agrarian households

class	area (ha)	exploitations (%)
1	< 0.5	7.5
2	0.5–1	9.6
3	1–3	35.7
4	3–5	22.8
5	5–10	17.8
6	10–20	5
7	20–50	1.1
8	> 50	0.5

Appendix 4: Collective Agricultural Farms (GAC) in Romania, 1949–1956⁵²

	1949	1950	1951	1952	1953	1954	1955	1956
number	56	1,027	1,089	1,795	1,997	2,070	2,152	2,564
families	4,042	67,719	75,379	171,445	169,004	178,561	183,188	231,329
total area (ha)	14,693	277,719	301,690	736,346	826,537	884,194	932,587	1,101,605

Appendix 5: Associations for working the land in Romania, 1952–1956⁵³

	1952	1953	1954	1955	1956
number	1,834	2,026	2,833	4,471	8,130
families	83,990	102,061	139,125	206,354	452,117
total area (ha)	187,662	235,270	315,119	392,045	753,352

Appendix 6: Investments in Romanian agriculture according to the documentary materials of the August 1953 Central Committee Plenum (million Romanian Lei)⁵⁴

	1951	1952	1953	1954	1955
state sector	817	913	1,054 (planned) 229 (supplement)	2,190 (planned)	2,650 (planned)
GACs	43	43	100 (planned)	100 (planned)	200 (planned)
individual households	–	–	–	200 (planned)	200 (planned)

Appendix 7: Growth of urban population, 1948–1971 (%)

	1948	1956	1966	1971
urban	23.4	31.3	38.2	41.1
rural	76.6	68.7	61.8	58.9

References

- 1 According to the official census from 1948, in: Ioan Alexandrescu/Ion Bulei/Ion Mamina/Ioan Scurtu, *Enciclopedia de Istorie a României*, Bucureşti, 2000, 343.
- 2 For the 1848 revolutionaries' programs see: Constantin Nuţu/Maria Totu, *Culegere de texte privind Istoria Modernă a României*, Bucureşti 1978.
- 3 Katherine Verdery, *Socialismul. Ce a fost şi ce urmează*, Iaşi 2003, 202.
- 4 I use here the concepts of 'etic' and 'emic' as developed by the anthropologist Marvin Harris to differentiate between the observers' – respectively the participants' – vision about a certain social phenomenon. See Marvin Harris, *Cultural Anthropology*, New York 1983.

- 5 Besides communist literature, dealing with the problem of violence more or less from an ideological point of view, a good example of interwar novelists addressing the issue of violence against the peasants is Liviu Rebreanu, with the novel *The Uprising* and the short story *The Stupid Ones*.
- 6 Hugh Seaton-Watson, *The Pattern of Communist Revolution*, London 1960, 337 f.
- 7 Francois Fejto, *Histoire de democracies populaires*. Tome I: L'ère de Stalin, 1945–1952, Paris 1972, 120 f.
- 8 Daniel Barbu, *Destinul colectiv, servitutea involuntară, nefericirea totalitară: trei mituri ale comunismului românesc*, in: Lucian Boia (ed.), *Miturile comunismului românesc*, București 1998, 192–194.
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- 15 *Ibid.*, f. 81–85.
- 16 Raportul lui Gheorghe Gheorghiu-Dej, in: Octavian Roske/Dan Cătănuș, *Colectivizarea agriculturii în România. Dimensiune Politică*. vol. I, 1949–1953, București 2000, 51.
- 17 *Ibid.*, 61.
- 18 D.A.N.I.C., Cancelaria Comitetului Central al Partidului Comunist, File no. 15/1949, Ședința Biroului Politic no. 3 din 15–17 februarie 1949, f. 7.
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- 21 *Ibid.*, f. 6.
- 22 Rezoluția ședinței plenare a C.C. al P.M.R. din 3–5 martie 1949, in: *Scânteia*, March 15, 1949, 1.
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- 24 N. Malinski, *Câteva aspecte ale problemei transformării socialiste a agriculturii noastre*, in: *Lupta de clasă*, November 1949, 76–80.
- 25 Robert Levy, *Primul val al colectivizării: politici centrale și implementare regională, (1949–1953)*, in: Dorin Dobrințu/Constantin Iordachi (eds.), *Țărănimea și puterea. Procesul de colectivizare a agriculturii în România (1949–1962)*, București 2005, 69.
- 26 For a clear explanation of expenses in a peasant economy and the so called ‘ceremonial fund’ see Erich R. Wolf, *Țăranii*, Chișinău 1998.
- 27 D.A.N.I.C., Cancelaria Comitetului Central al Partidului Comunist Român, File no. 46/1953, vol. I, Stenogramele plenarei din 19–20 august 1953, f. 124.
- 28 D.A.N.I.C., Cancelaria Comitetului Central al Partidului Comunist Român, File no. 46/1953, vol. II, Materiale Documentare ale Plenarei din 19–20 august 1953, f. 151.
- 29 *Ibid.*, f. 34.
- 30 In the summer of 2006 and 2007, I undertook some field work in the Brăila county, in the frame of a PhD project entitled ‘Agrarian Reforms and Modernization in Twentieth Century Romania. A case study’. Some of the people to whom I talked in this period, remembered that in some cases the collective farms members were bringing home the received products accompanied by singers, in an attempt to prove the welfare of the collectivists.
- 31 For details see Marius Oprea, *Transformarea socialistă a agriculturii: asaltul final, 1953–1962*, in: Dobrințu/Iordachi, *Țărănimea și puterea*, see fn. 25, 86–88.
- 32 I often saw this situation during the field work stage. When asked to describe how a collective farm worked, many respondents draw a complex dual hierarchy, with a political (party) branch and an administrative one. There was the president, the secretary (and the party secretary), the brigade chiefs, the team chiefs, the chariot drivers etc.. The case of Brăila area was not singular. See also Puiu Lățeș, *Cum să câștigi din pierdere. Colectivizarea într-un sat din Oltenia*, in: Dobrințu/Iordachi, *Țărănimea și puterea*, see fn. 25, 397.

- 33 Tănase, *Elite și Societate*, see fn. 13, 55.
- 34 *Ibid.*, 147.
- 35 This is confirmed by case studies such as Gail Kligman, *Crearea autorității comuniste: luptă de clasă și colectivizare la Ieud, Maramureș*, in: Dobrințu/Iordachi, *Țărâșimea și puterea*, see fn. 25, 234.
- 36 Dennis Deletant, *Ceaușescu and the Securitate, Coercion and Dissent in Romania, 1965–1989*, London 1995, 167.
- 37 Vlad Georgescu, *Istoria Românilor de la origini până în zilele noastre*, București 1995, 260.
- 38 D.A.N.I.C., Cancelaria Comitetului Central al Partidului Comunist Român, File no. 14/1954, Ședința tovarășului Moghioroș cu instructorii trimiși în regiuni pentru transformarea socialistă a agriculturii, f. 6.
- 39 D.A.N.I.C., Cancelaria Comitetului Central al Partidului Comunist Român, File no. 64/1954: Stenograma ședinței Biroului Politic din 5 iunie 1954, f. 14.
- 40 Oprea, *Transformarea socialistă a agriculturii*, see fn. 31, 90.
- 41 D.A.N.I.C., Cancelaria Comitetului Central al Partidului Comunist Român, File no. 93/1956, Stenograma ședinței C.C. al P.C.R. din 21 august 1956, f. 105.
- 42 *Ibid.*, f. 106.
- 43 Oprea, *Transformarea socialistă a agriculturii*, see fn. 31, 90–93.
- 44 București, 30 iulie 1949 – Decret pentru înființarea de gospodării agricole colective, in: Gheorghe Buzatu/Mircea Chirițoiu (eds.), *Agresiunea Comunismului în România. Documente din arhivele secrete. 1944–1989*, București 1998, 98.
- 45 Hotărârea nr. 1650 din 18 iunie 1953 cu privire la Statutul Model al Gospodăriilor Agricole Colective, in: Gheorghe Iancu/Virgil Țărău/Ottmar Trașcă (eds.), *Colectivizarea agriculturii în România. Aspecte legislative. 1945–1962*, Cluj-Napoca 2000, 262.
- 46 Hotărârea nr. 99 din 25 Ianuarie 1952 referitoare la aprobarea Statutului Model al întovărășirilor agricole de țărani muncitori pentru cultivarea laolaltă a pământului, in: Iancu/Țărău/Trașcă, *Colectivizarea agriculturii în România*, see fn. 45, 189.
- 47 Linda Miller, *Drept și propagandă: posesia asupra terenurilor agricole, colectivizarea și proprietatea socială*, in: Dobrințu/Iordachi, *Țărâșimea și puterea*, see fn. 25, 144 f.
- 48 See Fejto, *Historie de democraties populaires*, 120 f.
- 49 Nicoleta Ionescu-Gură, *Studiu Introductiv*, in: Florica Dobre (ed.), *Membrii C.C. al P.C.R. 1945–1989. Dicționar*, București 2004, 21.
- 50 The Romanian Communist Party was established in 1921 and functioned under this name until 1948, when, after its fusion with the Social Democratic Party, changed its name into Romanian Workers Party. In 1965, the party retook its old name Romanian Communist Party, which it held until 1989.
- 51 Alexandrescu/Bulei/Mamina/Scurtu, *Enciclopedia*, see fn. 1, 380.
- 52 Iancu Gheorghe, *Aspecte din procesul colectivizării agriculturii în România*, <http://www.history-cluj.ro/Istorie/anuare/2001/Iancu%20-%20Colectivizare.htm> (March 30, 2011).
- 53 *Ibid.*
- 54 D.A.N.I.C., C.C. of P.C.R. Office, File no. 46/1953, vol. II, *Materiale Documentare ale Plenarei din 19–20 august 1953*, 99 f. The distinction between the ‘state’ and ‘collectivist’ sectors is typical for the communist regime. The first one comprized the State Farms, the SMTs and different other state owned institutions of marginal importance for the agricultural production, while the second one comprized the collective farms and different forms of associations for working the land. In this particular case, the planned investments are for collective farms only.