

SPAȚIUL RURAL, ÎNTRE RECONSTRUCȚIE ȘI DEZVOLTARE

Between Loneliness and Survival. An Everyday Life Fragment in the Collectivized Village

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Abstract: *In this paper I will try to reconstitute some aspects of the everyday reality in the collectivized village in the seventh and eighth decades of the last century. I will focus on Aluniș village from the Benesat commune, Sălaj County, a village situated on Someș Valley, on the railway connecting cities Jibou and Baia Mare. The reconstruction is based on the memories, written almost daily, of a villager, Pașca Alexa, who was a former political prisoner. Beyond the inevitable subjectivity of such notes, they point to the daily fight for survival of the villagers, the strategies used to meet the challenges of the communist regime, and also they capture the acuity end of the peasantry, against the background of major social processes of the communist period. Using a contextual-localist methodological perspective based on everyday life testimonies, I tried to show that the communist regime cannot be catalogued in a reductionist and abstract way. It is, like any social structure, a builder of historicity, even if it implied a great human drama. Within the proposed approach I have tried to restore fragments of everyday life during the communist regime. I followed both relations of population with the authority and interpersonal relationships within the rural communities, which constitute the subjects of the diaries.*

Keywords: traditional peasant type village; survival strategies; end of peasantry; rural individualism; rural loneliness.

Cuvinte-cheie: sat tradițional de tip țărănesc; strategii de supraviețuire; sfârșitul țărănimii; individualism rural; singurătate rurală.

Introduction

A retrospective view upon the social reality of the collectivized village in Romania becomes slowly a moment of historic research, only possible by the use of archives and specialized bibliographies. Living actors, participants to the daily reality, disappear

from the life stage. We lack especially actors with sufficient objectivity, unaffected by the temporary dimensions or the mythologizing precariousness of a *post-festum* narration, and by the mechanisms of the social actions during those years. The characteristics of the everyday life become blurred, the interlocutors' subjectivity becomes a major impedi-

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ment for the analysis, the age and its related social contexts make the daily reality of the collectivized village difficult to reconstitute, based on oral testimonies. This is why it is extremely important to be able to reconstitute the daily life dimensions from “within”, based on contextual testimonies, made during the actual social act, as I will attempt to do next, having the rare opportunity to find a daily diary from the communist regime.

Studies upon the characteristics of the communist regime, in general, and the characteristics of the communist regime in Romania, in particular, are extremely numerous and, usually, they target spectacular phenomena, practiced at state level, dictators’ intrigues, bureaucracy and secret police (Kideckel, 2006, 17). Other books, especially Romanian, target the concentrationary system in Romania. They are generally written by former political prisoners (Ierunca, 1991; Noica, 1990; Goma, 1990; Ioanid, 1991).

For other researchers, communism meant a “frozen history”, a space in which history slowed down its rhythm, blocked in stereotype atemporality, generating gregarious beings, subject to an implacable regime, which destroyed their creativity, caveat and wish for freedom. What is left after the collapse of the communism do worth an ontological dignity in history?¹ “Neither principle, nor codes, institutions, not even a history” says a French researcher (Furet, 1995, 12). “The state power upon the individual emphasizes the absolute superiority of the whole” (Clit, 2001, 14), in relation to the individual. From this point of view, collectivism seems to be the dominating social issue during communism. Terror and massification destroyed individualities, caveat and critical spirit, according to these theoretical contributions. As a result of the seemingly reformist communism, practiced by Nicolae Ceaușescu at the beginning of the ‘70, through the gesture of recognizing the German Federal Republic, Israel and of utterly condemning the invasions of

Czechoslovakia, in 1968, by the troops of the Warsaw Pact, West and especially Great Britain and USA, attempted to build bridges with a communist regime practicing dissident politics in relation to Moscow, but which, during a time of certain states liberalization from the soviet block, internally develops a nationalistic Stalinism, instead of liberalization.

The secondary consequence of such a geopolitical perspective of the USA, – getting closer to Romania –, a perspective saturated by the realism of political calculations, yet beneficial, on a long term, for the Romanian society, was the fact that America considered that the communist regime in Romania may be reformed through a “social learning” action of the mechanisms of the democratic systems functioning. On this background, the USA Congress initiated a program of exchange between researchers specialized in social sciences, first of all, anthropologists, to analyze the realities of the two countries. Their work was not only a scientific one, but, indirectly, a pedagogical one, as well. “The USA Congress had established these connections in the idea that the interaction between Americans and the other participants should contribute to undermining the communist system. Their argument was the fact that foreign researchers would recognize the superiority of the American lifestyle, and that, once returned home, they would become opponents of the communist regime. Meanwhile, our own researchers abroad would be themselves agents of change, glorifying our way of life (Cole, 2004, 24).” The educational intention behind the USA Congress secret of democracy was misappropriated by the Romanian state, who sent to USA researchers in the fields of engineering and exact sciences: “the main interest fell on science and technology, with the purpose to obtain information and practices less known in East. In brief, they were interested in technological transfers. As such,

while USA participants mainly came from human sciences, the Romanian candidates were specialized in exact sciences and engineering” (Cole, 2004, 25). The result of this was the creation of the *Romanian Research Group* in 1977, comprising anthropologists such as Sam Beck, John, M. Cole, David A. Kideckel, Marilyn Mc Arthur, Steven Randall and Steve Sampson. David Kideckel is owed a remarkable research of the Romanian rural everyday life during communism called in the American version *The Solitude of Collectivism. Villagers to the Revolution and Beyond*, (Kideckel, 1993) and in the Romanian version *Colectivism și singurătate în satele românești. Țara Oltului în perioada comunistă și în primii ani după Revoluție* (Kideckel, 2006). How is D. Kideckel’s perspective different from those previously presented about the communist regime?

In line with the theoretical alignment of the cultural relativism, only locally contextualized approaches may clarify the internal mechanisms of the society, and in this case, the understanding of Romanian realities “in its own terms” (Kideckel, 2006, 19). In other words, it is all about deciphering the logics of social actions, of the individual – state connection, the role and characteristics of social networks in the status construction. Through such a methodological alignment, the analysis of the Romanian society during the communism based on the research of Făgăraș County, D. Kideckel will reveal the complicated links between the individual and the socialist state, the population’s adaptability and discontentment with the social system, element which ultimately constitute what we may call the individual and social survival strategy during the communism.

“The case of Olt Country though, alongside the peculiar forty years of socialism in Eastern and Central Europe, suggests that the link between the state and the people is not as easily dichotomizing. All these cases indicate, in fact, a paradox:

the fact that the practice of every day life and the reproduction of social institutions within social communities facilitated state domination, as well as created the conditions and the conscience of its own demise” (Kideckel, 2006, 16). Therefore, the communist period is no longer a hiatus of history, it is, in fact, the producer of a specific history and generates specific phenomena, out of the individuals’ and communities’ attempt to adapt and reproduce the functioning of the social organism. Some social phenomena generated within the socialist system will prolong their functioning during post-communism. Therefore, although from an ideological point of view communism utilizes a communitarian doctrine, in practice, the individual will adopt new every day survival strategies, in the context of great processes of social mobility, the transformation of rural economy structures by the peasants’ expropriation of land, in parallel with the socialist industrialization. The survival strategies are: individualism will replace collectivism, great ruptures will occur between the peasant type rural tradition and the new post-peasant rural, in course of development after collectivization, shortage of food and other goods will be motivated by social responses based on fan-shaped strategies, centered on the extended household, with status constructions extremely diversified among the household members according to age, gender and education, in order to multiply the chances to access as many goods as possible, and new social networks will be constructed in parallel, and even in opposition with the equalitarian ideologies promoted by the communist regime.

The anthropological perspectives built by D. Kideckel are extremely useful when analysing the characteristics of the every day life in rural areas during communism from other regions in Romania. Because of this, my presentation will make reference to the American anthropologist’s observations as many times as necessary.

This study of the every day life in a collectivized village from communist Romania has as main source of information a diary containing occasional notes made by a peasant from a village in Sălaj County. Based on them, I have tried to rebuild fragments of the everyday life, focusing on the following aspects: dissolution of the traditional village, as a result of the agriculture collectivisation and the birth of new social values, characteristics of work practices and social relations built inside a collectivized village, the effects of the 80' economical crisis upon the Romanian social life in general, and the rural life in particular, the profound social cleavages occurred between the disappearing peasant world and the new social categories appeared as a result of intense urbanisation and industrialisation processes and they way agents of the communist party – party members, are perceived in the rural reality.

The theoretical premiss i started from is the fact that the communist period cannot be nominalistically abelled as a period of “frozen history”. It has its own historicity, its own social agents, trying to identify response strategies to the challenges of an aggressive history, in order to be able to survive under extremely difficult circumstances imposed upon the Romanian society by the representatives of a social system which attempted to erase the tradition and the collective memory.

Short history of a diary

In 1993, I was doing fieldwork in the villages on the Someş Valley, in Sălaj County, when someone brought to my attention the fact that in Aluniş village, Benesat commune, there was an old man, a former political prisoner, a much respected and well known person in the area. This is how I met Paşca Alexa, who was around 70 years old, back then (unfortunately, he died).

In 1948, he joins the illegally functioning National Peasant Party (Partidul Național Țărănesc), alongside other villagers in the area. In 1949, he is arrested and trialed by the Cluj-Napoca Military Court, and, subsequently, convicted to four years in prison for “subversive activities against the communist regime”. He served five years detained in Gherla and Poarta Albă prisons, the “Peninsula” colony of political prisoners from Dobrogea, where he worked on building the Danube – Black Sea channel.

A long time after his release, in 1971, he begins writing down his everyday life impressions in books of *memoirs*. Most of these impressions refer to meteorological phenomena, but the *memoirs* also contain a series of extremely interesting observations of the village life during the last period of the communist regime. There are a total of 14 notebooks, but I have only selected those related to the everyday life of the village and area other general ones, characterizing general aspects of the communist regime, the notes refer to the entire period between 1971 and 1985. In my presentation below, I have tried to group the notes thematically, so as to build an image of the social phenomena specific to the rural world during communism. The notes refer to a period in which peasants tried to adjust to the new historical situation. The revolt specific for the '50s was replaced by a fatalistic attitude, while the brave social disputes were replaced by a generalized demoralization. New social frames have reshaped the mentalities and the collective imagination.

About the traditional village, the dissolution of traditions and (about) rural seclusion

The cooperativization of agriculture marked the beginning of the traditional village dissolution process. I would like to

mention the fact that the notion of “traditional village” is ambiguous, though a vague extension: it can define different social realities, both from a diachronic and a geographic perspective; its methodological value is only relevant from the point of view of the distinction between the peasant village and the post-peasant village, “de-peasantised”, a phase of current rural area. According to this distinction, the traditional village means a peasant-type village, the history of which generally tends to be de-structured at the beginning of the ‘60s, in the XXth century (Şişeştean, 2009, 69-81).

Although certain Romanian sociologists, after 1989, talk about the “re-peasantisation of agriculture”, in the circumstances of a return to small parcel property, we believe such an indicator is not sufficient for discussing a history shortcut, in the sense of its “re-peasantisation”. In the late post-communist period, rural categories using agriculture as a complementary means of subsistence, or even income are extremely diverse, but non-peasant, except for some rare exceptions. For most rural categories (pensioners, industrial workers, clerks, teachers, priests), where agriculture is still practiced, it is a supplementary source of consumption and, occasionally, of income in addition to the income obtained from other non-agricultural sources. This observation, also valid in the first post-communist years, became more and more valid with time: it can be currently noticed that, just like in France (7th decade), a neo-rural has appeared, not only “de-peasantised”, but more and more nonagricultural, because less and less people are involved in cultivating the land (Mathieu, 1990, 197; Mendras, 1991; Şişeştean, 1996).

Peasant-type rural collectivities begin the dissolution process once agriculture is collectivized.

First of all, dispossessing the peasants of land turns them, from an economic point of view, into a social category lacking independence of decision on crops, and

which, in order to subsist, is forced either to work in the CAP (Agricultural Production Cooperatives), under new work circumstances which rebuild practices similar to medieval ones, or to enter the new frame of industrial economic system, of urban type. In the case of commuters, as D. Kideckel noticed, commuting is a desirable strategy for multiplying the opportunities to access resources, both salary wise and agriculturally, as a result of the commuter’s and his family’s participation to agricultural activities within the CAP, and within the 30 acres lot maintained for household use. This lot was an important source of subsistence, but, at the same time, it was a source of pressure used by local authorities to force rural families to work for the CAP, conditioning this with the danger of losing the lot (Kideckel, 2006, 60).

Second of all, the social systems ensuring community solidarity lose their societal relevance, once new social value systems appear: land is no longer a source of prestige, agriculture is considered an inferior activity, reserved to women, elderly and those uneducated, and a community breakdown takes place between those moved to cities and those left behind, between those with higher income obtained through nonagricultural activities and those solely involved in agriculture. The village is no longer a community organism based on getting to know each other and social control, but a factor producing social atomization. But here is how Henri Mendras describes the characteristics of the peasant-type village, the history of which generally ends in the 7th decade of last century:

“Rural society is subdivided into local collectivities, living in a relative demographic, economic and cultural autarchy... All collectivities were of this type, but each was original.

Each collectivity is a group of interknowledge, where everybody knows everybody and everything about everybody. Social connections are, therefore, personal

and nonfunctional, as well as segmentary. The collectivity reunites actual peasants (farmers, agriculturalists, land owners, leaseholders or employees and their families), as well as non-peasants (notabilities, craftsmen, traders, etc.); but the dominating tone of the society is given by peasants. The power normally belongs to notabilities, who find themselves at the border between local collectivity and global society. The main cleavages are often hierarchical, based on a social and economical prestige scales. In other cases, they can be ideological, ecological or familial, in a wide sense: kinship and clientele often mixing. And finally, age and gender categories are generally strongly emphasized.

In such well structured collectivities, everything contributes to establishing the whole, and change can only manifest slowly, indirectly, and finally becoming auto-contradictory. This collectivities are not blocked, but, with the exception of serious crisis, they evolve slowly, in the rhythm of generations. Any innovation, whether technical, economical or demographical, comes from outside... In such a social system, the individual does not have to adapt to the new situations, neither does he have to take decisions; he doesn't have to express himself, neither to open himself to others, who already know him under all aspects. The individual, therefore, has the tendency to be faithful to himself and to the image others have about him. The manifestation or expression of feelings and personal opinions is not encouraged by the code of values and norms" (Mendras, 1991, 18-19).

Although the "end of peasantry" is almost simultaneously produced in Western Europe, as well as Eastern, the social mechanisms of the phenomenon genesis are different. In the West, this took place organically, by introducing new technology and agricultural devices, merging of lands and organizing agricultural cooperatives, phenomena that will generate an explosion

of productivity and the disappearing of small parcel peasant property, incapable to fight the farm system competition (Lamaison, 1988, 110-111).²

In Romania, the "end of peasantry" was state run, imposed from the outside by the communist state, through the agriculture collectivization process, a phenomenon that will produce ample restructurings of the Romanian village, but only partially in the direction of modernization. It will be pushed towards a chronic underdevelopment, as a result of lack of human and material resources, and inefficiency of agricultural activities within CAP.

In his diary, Paşca Alexa writes about such phenomena. As a result, theft, more and more generalized, is seen by the end of the communist period as something perfectly legitimate, as a compensation of the fact that authorities do not pay for the work done, and arbitrary has been instituted in the work relations:

"The atmosphere in the village was that of a work day, everybody running around the place, as it was time for corn harvesting and many people went to the CAP stables to take their work share. But the general feeling was that of discontent, because it was harder than during the time of great landowners, as, back then, the peasant working for the landowner knew exactly how much he would receive, while with the CAP, a person was working without ever knowing what his rights were after such a work. This gave birth to a spirit of theft in the people. Everybody was stealing from the land, everything they would land their hands on, believing deep down that only if you steal you have something, otherwise it is just work.

Because of this feeling, on October 29, 1977, during corn harvesting at the CAP, many people, that is, most people who went harvesting, took corn bags to the houses at the edge of the village. When the authorities heard about this, the mayor Opriş Emil and the "miliția" checked the

place and found bags and confiscated them. On Sunday morning, October 30, many people that had not been caught by the miliția the previous evening, did not have patience to leave the bags where they were hidden and they went after them during Church mass and, as the miliția was watching, many were caught. A while after that, they were called at the People's Council where they were trialed and fined, with as much as 800-1000 lei. All these mentioned above were generated by the feeling of uncertainty in which peasants live nowadays, after private property of the land was cancelled. Now, the peasant working the land would be happy to receive 1/3 of the production... but this was not the case, especially here, in our village. This system did not belong to life, it was impossible to administrate without making abuses" (Pașca, 1977).

A strange thing happened, unheard of before, during the corn harvest this time, when authorities brought military forces (miliția and guards) to watch the harvesting and make sure nobody was stealing. We may say that these measures were, to some extent, justified, but why is it that before, when peasants owned the land, there were no thefts?

What are the causes of these thefts?

"The first cause is that peasantry lost confidence in the always lying leadership system. This led to the second cause, the more serious one: people always live in fear of famine, bringing out of people a spirit of clutching, not knowing what tomorrow may bring. If they are given close to nothing, it is no surprise they steal" (Pașca, 1982).

"In agriculture, harvesting began. With the miliția, as usual, because peasants got used to stealing as they could not be sure if they would receive anything. This habit became so frequent that even miliția could not stop it. Miliția does not resort to great acts of coercion here, as they know very well the habit of stealing was born out of

the fact people were not being paid for their work, not even a quarter, and they never knew what they would receive for their work, if anything.

Another negative aspect is the fact that there was a lot of preying caused by the poor organization of work. Strict orders were coming from above, such as, for example, all the silo corn to be picked by the date of... and wheat to be planted instead, and then everybody began the crazy work. If the term came and harvesting was not finished, hundreds of kilos of corn would be buried in the ground and wheat would be planted on top. Tractor drivers said they had no choice, it was impossible to tell what was previously sowed in the ground" (Pașca, 1985).

"The harvesting time continued. Guards were placed, with guns and ammo. I don't know if the ammo was the real thing, or just for maneuvers. Peasants were so well watched, that they were unable to take a corn cob. If caught by the miliția, the fines were extremely high, and in other areas they would be taken to court and even end up in jail.

School children, instead of studying, were taken by their teachers and educators to work the land, picking corn or other crops. Pupils lead by teachers would come from the cities, by the hundreds, to pick corn. The teachers were not working, they were just supervising the pupils. Factory workers were also taken to work the land. Of course they were not paid for this work, they would work in vain. On the contrary, they would have to agree to even more work in the factory to compensate the time for picking the corn" (Pașca, 1985).

During this time, a great struggle takes place between the peasantry and the local authorities, because peasants received nothing after their work, except for some hay and corn cobs, a very little money.

The weapons used by the peasants were: theft, sabotage or neglect:

1. Theft was not theft in itself, it was more of an appropriation of what was rightfully theirs after the work done, without the authorities' approval. If they were given nothing, the peasants would take it themselves, by theft;
2. Sabotage, in the sense that they would not do the work on time, and people would leave corn cobs on the land. They delayed harvesting as much as possible, to be able to take the corn home;
3. Neglect, in the sense that nobody cared about the CAP's fortune. Everybody was concerned about their own fate (Pașca, 1985).

The change in the social values, the lack of confidence in institutions and authorities, the dissolution of the civic spirit and collective solidarity, considering theft as a normal behavior, as a compensation for the fact that communist party representatives would steal work from them, are social phenomena occurred during communism, but it seems like that the logics of the social action is also reproduced in the post-communist period, having the previously built mental structures as background (Goia, 1999, 94).³

The communist economic system generates individualism, social isolation and is incapable to achieve projections of social purposes, which would make the society united:

“From a psychological and social point of view, people were sad, and a great sense of neglect can be observed. Especially from a social point of view, there were no activities that would raise people's moral. Everybody was in a state of selfishness, not thinking at all about the social interests, it seemed like everybody was only living for tomorrow” (Pașca, 1972).

“On the Feast of the Annunciation Day, the priest was forced by the authorities to enter the Church earlier, so that people, especially women – because many women were at home – could go to CAP to plant

onions. This was in vain, because only very few people went, so it would have been better to leave people in peace. The priest was in such a great hurt to perform the religious service, that he skipped the matins.

The peasants' life during these times was full of anxiousness and insecurity, caused by an economic system that pushed peasantry backwards, in an ongoing instability. The peasant was in control of nothing. He never knew what tomorrow might bring, everything was at the discretion of the administration and cooperative management, who were unable to ensure the well functioning of agriculture, always changing one thing or another” (Pașca, 1977).

“People were quiet, minding their own business, and you would not hear them talking about social problems. They were leading a closed, monotonous life, especially in the villages. The times when villages had an open and full life were gone” (Pașca, 1974).

The Church was, probably, the only remaining (open, common) space of the rural societies, but winter holidays could no longer build the collective socialization mechanisms:

“Less and less people in Church. Even during holidays, the village looks like a work camp, there is no sign this is a feast day, only Church bells still tell people that God has not forgotten us yet” (Pașca, 1981).

“Christmas. Besides Mass, nothing else special happened during the day that would make the village look livelier. If it wasn't for the Church, many people would probably not see each other by the years” (Pașca, 1977).

Christmas. Another painful thing is that there is almost no caroling happening anymore, that is, people stopped singing carols like the way they used to, when the entire village was singing. Now, after eleven at night, the village falls in a silence unimaginable in other times. Only after

three, four hour in the morning, some – very few – carols can be heard, although the weather was really good, courage was lacking.

“On the second day of Christmas, there were only two, three men at the Church, and a few women. When leaving the Church, the weather was so nice, clear sky and bright sun, but the village seemed asleep, there was no move, just a few people were going to catch the train to Baia Mare for work. These holidays were quite bare, and the Church was the only place where the pulse of life could still be felt, the only place where people still saw each other, together” (Pașca, 1972).

“This night was quite sad, people did not sing carols to each other, the only ones caroling were boys going to see girls. But this youth, taken away from the country side, from tradition, gave a poor performance, lacking that breath of life that was there before collectivization, and I think it will never be the same. This happened once peasants were torn from the land and turned into semi-serfs and neo-slaves” (Pașca, 1981).

“Christmas. I don’t know, is it just my impression, or is it the sad truth that people have lately started to lose their vitality, they are not as cheerful as they used to be and if you get to see a cheerful person, it is only for show. A state of apathy can be noticed everywhere, people seem to be imprisoned, as only there have I seen something like this” (Pașca, 1985).

“If we look back only 10-15 years, we will realize winter holidays back then were a lot more cheerful. Schools and educators tried to give this holiday a special splendor, though celebrations organized in the evening of December 31, followed by parties with dancing and joy, until morning, with all villagers present. In the mornings, we would be woken up by groups of gypsies singing carols. Now all of these are gone, replaced by people’s isolation in their homes, in front of TV sets. This year,

Church was still the only one slightly changing the monotony of the New Year’s Day. In the afternoon, the same monotonous life set in as during the night” (Pașca, 1972).

“In the New Year’s Eve, a small youth celebration took place in the school, but far from the celebrations that used to be organized before the collectivization, where the entire village would participate... In the afternoon of the New Year’s Day, the village seemed deserted, there were no folk dances, dances which used to give so much charm to the village and seed so much joy in people’s souls” (Pașca, 1976).

Rural modernization during the communism also marked the apparition of new strategies within the rural family, centered on the household, and not on the land. The peasants’ expropriation of land made them rethink the options regarding the re-dimensioning of the household, which tends to become bi-generational, tri-generational, a phenomenon also noticed by D. Kideckel in the case of Olt Country (Kideckel, 2006, 89-90). The house is the social sign of prestige and a way to show off wealth, less valued through its functional dimension of being a home. All these forms of rural modernization cannot compensate the de-socialization phenomena, and alcohol becomes the solution to social estranging:

“Joyfulness is no longer what it used to be, when people had their own land and were free. They did not have to wake up and go on construction sites.

There is plenty of food, drinks, beautiful clothes, but peace and quiet disappeared almost completely, and alcohol is the only thing left to make people happy, as people drink more than ever. Collectivization killed joyfulness in the village, people, especially youth, go away to cities and factories, and the elderly and the women are the only ones left, but even they started to leave. Deserted houses began to appear, the CAPs go from bad to

worse, the land is poorer and poorer, because it is not fertilized and nobody works it. The weakest of the people take care of cattle, people who had nowhere else to go to. Handicraftsmen are few in the village, and they are old” (Pașca, 1978).

“In appearance, houses were beautifully adorned, with handworks, furniture, many curtains, too many, but most of them were deserted, as many people had, besides the house itself, kitchens – some of them real houses, others on the edge of the shed, where food and other household items were once deposited. Now, since the collectivization, they did not have what to put in them anymore, so they turned them into homes, especially for the elder, as they were easier to heat and as most of the young people had left to cities, anyway. Now, in spite of all their beauty, houses seemed empty, most of them, and no life pulsed in the village as it used to. More and more people are isolated from each other. Technology and modernism has indeed eased their work, but ruined their soul and took away their freedom. TV turns a human being into nothing more than an animal that it slowly destroys inside, making people simple robots pushing the buttons of certain individuals who give them what they are interested in. Step by step, people become robots with less reason.

The peasant, who used to be so connected to nature, animal breeding and the beauty of the village life, is now almost disgusted at everything, nothing attracts him anymore, nothing makes him happy, because he does not own anything anymore. Freedom is connected to property, and where there is no property, there is no freedom.

Everybody is waiting for something. What? Nobody knows, there is uncertainty about tomorrow, nobody is sure of anything. That is why people drink, they drink without stopping, and even women became drunkards and revels, in our village as well, where women left their husbands, families and children and left to seek

entertainment. Where are we heading? Who’s to blame? Difficult to say” (Pașca, 1980).

About the situation in the CAPs

After collectivization, each rural household was given a “helping lot”, usually in the same location as the household and having, in principle, maximum 30 acres of land. According to D. Kideckel (Kideckel, 2006, 60) “these parcels of land covered up to three fourths of the subsistence needs of rural population and they were an important source of fodder for animals, potatoes, vegetables and fruit... Access to this harvest was important, especially during the ‘80s economic crisis. Because of this, peasants were able to maintain a minimum standard of alimentation, while workers in cities, often lacking connections to the rural area, were struggling hard. Because of the importance the parcel had for the peasant, village representatives often used it as an exchange currency to manipulate and mobilize agrarian work force, and to make sure peasants accept the state politics”. Such a situation can also be found in Aluniș village, in Pașca Alexa’s notes:

“From a moral point of view, the people are very confused, especially the peasant, because in a congress of agricultural cooperatives (of course, attended by the unit managers rather than peasants), decisions were taken expropriating peasants from their last pieces of land that was left to them (30 acres), leaving them with only the house area (5-8 acres), taken, especially from those who, unable to live off these cooperatives, earned their living in other sectors of the economy” (Pașca, 1972).

From a social point of view, following the frictions related to gardens, things improved, leaving the 30 acres to those peasants who were employed elsewhere, on

the condition that they help out with the cooperative. It has to be mentioned here that not all villages went through these misunderstandings, as places where the unit managers were worthier; this was not even an issue.

The mayor was changed. During the 1970 floods, he gave some favors while distributing state aids. Citizens were unhappy about this change because, although from an administrative point of view the mayor wasn't doing much, he was getting along well with the people, did not force anyone, and, as much as possible, solved certain personal issues. The mayor position was taken by a guy called Coman, from Sighet or Vișeu area, former *miliția* and married to a girl from Biușa village (*n. n. village belonging to Benesat commune*), a harsh and tough kind of person, not at all liked by the people, because wanting to appear tough, he did not have much respect for the people, and from an administrative point of view he was even worse than the previous one, because this one did not know the meaning of a household, he only knew how to write, threaten and give orders.

The CAP President in that period was Năpreădean Gheorghe, from Aluniș, a man too weak to handle an agricultural household, not even his own, and he was also a sickly.

"In the whole village of Aluniș, there is only one harness, with two horses" (Pașca, 1972).

"Seven peasants from our village, Aluniș, went to Zalău Court, as they were sewed by the Benesat CAP management, for the piece of land they had in their garden (*n. n. as "helping lot"*), arguing they had more than they were due" (Pașca, 1973).

Although CAP units benefited from certain material resources (animals, fodder, technologies), the poor work organization caused by the poor management skills of those leading the units, as well as by the

workers' lack of competence and motivation, as they were usually recruited from those unable to find a job in cities, made the results in zootechnics to be disastrous, the animal mortality high and, in case they did survive until spring, they would lack any zootechnical efficiency. With regards to vegetables and wheat, agriculture became feminized, as most men were involved in the industrial mobility processes.

"I went to the CAP sheds to mash some turnips (*n. n. fodder beetroot*) (I had not been there for a long time, especially in winter). What I saw was horrifying – the waste and the chaos: fodder stepped all over, bales scattered everywhere, numerous skinny cows and dirt everywhere. People working there had no interest in cleaning or at least in picking up the fodder anymore. Cows which gave milk were only fed corn husks brought from the fields, some corn but spoiled, while sheep, instead of being taken out on the field, at least for walking, received hay and stayed in stables, although there were four shepherds. There was absolutely no interest, because people were not paid for their work" (Pașca, 1978).

"As far as agriculture is concerned, it went from bad to worse, mainly due to the lack in work force, as most peasants left to work in factories and enterprises, and even women began leaving agriculture. It even went down to being unable to find a brigadier, nobody would take the risk to lead in agriculture. A woman was eventually found and made brigadier" (Pașca, 1978).

"In agriculture, spring works had begun. The cows from the CAP were in the worst state. They ate nothing but frozen husks and spoiled corn. Some were barely able to stand. After the sheep ate all the fodder picked for the cattle were abandoned and neglected, ending up in a really poor shape. By the beginning of March, all CAP animals were left without fodder" (Pașca, 1978).

CAP Brigade meeting

“A few old people, women more. An atmosphere of discontent, the management was giving clarifications and making calculations on the blackboard, the same as in other years, but which brought almost no clarification. From everything discussed, it turned out that some people worked in some places, but nobody received anything. People didn’t care much about the helping lot anymore, and the general tendency was that of not working the land anymore, under the current circumstances. A strange event happened in the life of the village agricultural cooperative. Through a management decision, measurements were made this summer and it came out that a lot of people had extra harvests from the gardens of the so called helping lot, which were, in fact, their ancestors’ gardens. According to this extra harvest, the management decided to request corn (after having requested money, in quite large amounts). In a similar manner, the corn requested this time was also in large and absurd quantities. The reason given was that the CAP had no corn for sowing. The real cause was the lack of a wise management. A lot of vegetables have been sowed this year, no harm in that, but the land had not been well prepared for such harvesting, so that everything cultivated there did not produce the expected results or rather, no results, and expenses were all that was left. Therefore, beetroot was sowed on the land called Tufoi, a hill bad for corn too while worked by individual peasants, who fertilized it well, but that land had not seen any fertilizers for a long time. Another piece of land was sowed, Inățele, with the same poor results. Having been left with no hope for any harvest, sheep were taken to feed there, so the land became bare” (Pașca, 1979).

Life in the village is not much different from the life years ago. Work days are the same, workers are commuting, peasants

work the land, same mistrust as always, even worse; they work for almost nothing in return, CAP is unable to get back on its feet. Those from the top do not feel, but dictate, those from below execute, without thinking, and the people suffer.

“In our village, mowing is not done on time. Because of this, a parcel of clover that was supposed to be mowed for the third time now, is only mowed for the second time, and the clover fallen to the ground is rotting and drying, while the new clover comes out through it, so neither one, nor the other are good. The natural fertilizer is scattered besides sheds chaotically; there are no platforms and no holes for urine. When it is transported to the land however, they scatter it astray, in small heaps, where it disappears or is dispersed wrong.

Forests are pastured and cut down without any plan. A tree from here, one from there. Together with the trees marked, just as many unmarked ones are cut down, or even more, and especially during summer, which is absolutely wrong. If you look at a forest, it looks beautiful from far away, but if you walk through it, trees are so rare that you can take a cart, or even a truck, if you want. Plenty of new plantations were made, costing lots of money, but they will never end up growing into big trees, especially beside villages, if special protection measures are not taken for them, which will be difficult, because of the spirit of destruction taking over more and more people.

Enough cattle are grown in the CAP, maybe too many, but the money spent with their growing greatly surpasses the gains. After 17 years of existence, the CAP completes its life stock from private breeders. Nobody could hear of a CAP going well...” (Pașca, 1979).

A planned visit from Nicolae Ceaușescu causes a great disturbance of the agricultural works:

“People carried leaves for the cows’ layers. The peasants did not have layers for the cattle lately, and they received only a little hay from the CAP, so leaves were much sought.

On this day, a fair was supposed to take place in Jibou, but there were great preparations happening, as they were waiting for Ceaușescu, so people were not allowed to go to the fair. Meetings after meetings were held; in fact, one day at the end of October, as the brigadier was a woman, who was also the storekeeper, and because she had to go to a meeting, she left the peasants with tens, if not hundreds, of corn bags unloaded, and left to attend the meeting. A great rain fell over night, and then we are surprised we have nothing. This meeting was about Ceaușescu’s visit. As they did not know how to make it, so that he wouldn’t see it all. They were sending people from one place to another, not knowing what to do first, to cut down the husks or to take out the parsley? In the end, women were taken away from harvesting the parsley, as it was in the ground anyway and no one could see it, and sent them to gather the husks, as those were above ground and “the boss” could see those” (Pașca, 1979).

“In the end, on November 6, at around 10:30, Ceaușescu drove by on the way to Jibou. I believe he paid so much attention, that he didn’t see the road, nor did he see the husks. Everything was pointless propaganda.

As far as I am concerned, a leader – either big or small, should not be lied to by his underlings. On the contrary, the truth must be shown as it is. But he doesn’t like the truth, and the underlings know this, so they bombard him with praises and applause, and things remain the way there were.

In the end, we had no onions, because, in order to receive gas for the gas lamp, they asked for onion in return” (Pașca, 1979).

“No more husks were being picked on the field, as many were uncut; people would have cut them earlier, but they were not allowed, as they were told those were to be cut with machines. Now they realized they couldn’t do that, so they sent people to cut, but is it hard, because of the cold” (Pașca, 1979).

About the economic crisis and its effects in the rural world

“The economic crisis in the ‘80s intensified differences between urban and rural. Lack of food, heat, electricity and water in urban areas generated resentment towards peasants, while the forced returns to CAPs, the increase of production plans and the lack of processed food, only available in urban areas, generated peasants’ resentment towards city people” (Kideckel, 2006, 65). Commuters are to be found between these two social categories, people suspended between two worlds; attending agricultural work, the social request for food would diminish by the contribution of the subsistence economy, lowering the pressure upon the state economy. On the other hand, their particular status would make them go through powerful identity crisis. “Not fully integrated in the city life, nor in the village life, these peasants were marginalized by factories, as well as by the collective farms. Oscillating between two worlds, they found fragmented social relation in both” (Kideckel, 2006, 65).

The new social category – the commuters –, change the rhythms of rural ritualistic events:

“There were not many people in Church, because of the wedding last night. The habit to organize wedding on Saturdays started after collectivization, because through this event, the man became so preoccupied with the problem of existence, that he had not peace and quiet if

the only free day, Sunday, had to be sacrificed. Men left to cities, where they found jobs at various factories, and they were only home on Sundays” (Pașca, 1973).

Romanian Communist Party (PCR) members with management position are also carriers of some mutations in the rural traditions:

“Another wedding took place in the village. The Ceremony (*n. n. religious*) was not performed, as the groom was the village mayor, appointed by the party, so he was afraid he would be criticized during meetings, as party members were not allowed to have anything to do with practices related to the faith in God, so some were afraid for their jobs and did not dare to do this. Still, the ceremony did take place, but after the wedding, and without anybody knowing” (Pașca, 1977).

The beginning of the economic crisis, which, during the ‘80s, would severely affect the entire Romanian society, happened in 1976, when a campaign began in villages for compulsory contracts with the state, in order to compensate the meat deficit on the market. In these “persuasion” campaigns, village school teachers were generally used, who therefore became social characters hated by the villagers:

“During this spring, up until the end of March, great pressure was applied on the peasants, in order to sign contracts with the state for the pigs, as they used to be pressured when collectivization began. Peasants were called to the village school, where 5-6 people responsible with the “persuasion” were waiting, as people named them back when they were pestered to join the collectivity” (Pașca, 1976).

The work force crisis in CAPs made the village adopt absurd measures, by which all people apt for labor to work during the day the CAP land:

“The County leaders gave certain orders that had no point, especially one saying that village stores should only be opened

between 5:00 in the morning and 6:30 in the morning. This way, the poor people barely had time to buy what they needed, in the mornings” (Pașca, 1980).

“Meanwhile, there is a severe shortage of some strictly necessary products: salt, oil, margarine, butter, matches, socks, especially winter socks for men” (Pașca, 1980).

The earthquake in Italy is a good pretext for new acquisitions in the rural households:

“A quite shameful case was also the fact that, in this period, the commune authorities came to take the chicken, saying they were for Italy, where the great earthquake happened, but in fact, they were completing the meat acquisition plans for 1980” (Pașca, 1980).

The sale of matches was a special event, recorded as such:

“After a few months where no matches could be found, a few appeared in our village as well, at the bar” (Pașca, 1981).

The economic crisis deepens, causing a shortage of products of great use, industrial and food:

“Meeting” for the CAP report

A meeting which was no more interesting than others: as in previous ones, the same song was sung. A woman came by, who was deputy secretary at the county council, who talked, as usual, blaming us the peasants, as if we intended for this to happen. They don’t want to know how much hardship, tears and resistance meant this collectivization. I noticed one thing: these party people are truly afraid of the truth and they don’t want to look it in the eyes, they don’t want to understand something needs to be changed here. They insist to do their thing, as they were “dumb”, while the result is obvious when you go to the market. They are almost empty, food is missing, long lines to buy

bread, lines to buy potatoes, no milk, no meat, and all this, after almost twenty years of collectivization.

They all want positions; they all want to go to the city, where life is easier in comparison with the villages, because there, at least a salary is ensured, while in the country side, everything is a problem.

There is a great shortage of food now; there is no bread in villages, any tinned meat or fish. Oil is given in exchange for eggs. There is no milk in the cities. There are no files for the saw. Corn flower has been missing for years. There is no bicarbonate. Seeing that people are more and more restless, especially in the cities, authorities introduce a rationalization system, for oil and sugar, as this was no longer needed for meat, since almost none existed, anyway. Pork came mostly from private breeder, through contracting, mostly forced” (Pașca, 1981).

Economic phenomenon continued, during the crisis, the biggest one since the war. So many things are missing, that this didn't even happen during the war. Even shoe polish is missing. During electricity cuts, people use lamps. But the gas is missing, and people use what they have to make light, some still have some gas, but other use candles (Pașca, 1981).

The miliția office, that is supposed to keep public order, is “guarded”, through rotation, by two villagers:

“The political atmosphere is quite tense now, and beginning with August 27, 1981, the miliția is guarded by two people over night” (Pașca, 1981).

In spite of the increasing severity of the economic crisis, the communist authorities organize large peace manifestations, meant to show off the nation solidarity, “united around the party and its beloved Leader”:

“Great movement in our country for peace. Demonstrations in all cities, made on command. Workers were extracted from their work places, losing a lot of work hours, which then had to be recovered, so

these days of respite usually meant working in Sundays” (Pașca, 1981).

Christmas is coming and all households are anxious. They did not know what to give to carolers as there were no croissants, bread and wherever they turned to for help, no promises were made. Something like this has never happened before, maybe to some extent in 1942, but then it was war, so that was no surprise. We are going through very hard days and there is no hope for better” (Pașca, 1981).

More and more alarming rumors were spreading, especially since an order came from the top, requesting all CAPs to transport to base all the wheat in stock, which was done.

In our village, the CAP president tried to oppose this, saying more should be given to people, but he was pressed by the top one; he still gave out some wheat, quickly, then the rest was gone.

There were great shortages of some products, for example there were no batteries for flashlights, triangle files, files for saws, wool or cotton socks and so on” (Pașca, 1982).

“We, peasants, were almost taken everything; not directly, but using other methods; for example, if you wanted to buy cigarettes, you had to give eggs, if you needed corn flower, you had to give chicken. Anything the peasant lacked, he could only obtain by giving food, which he also lacked. Contracting milk was almost done by force, being unrealistic and impossible to achieve” (Pașca, 1982).

There were electricity restrictions, on Wednesdays and Saturdays, between 7 and 11 in the morning, and 3 and 7 in the afternoons, while it was normal in the other days.

For many products, you had to give either eggs, or beans, potatoes, meat. Even for a pack of bicarbonate, you had to give one egg. But the most special one it was heard that it was given for corn husks. For one bundle, 100 grams of brandy was given.

Now, after the animal and poultry census, controls took place, and where animals and poultry were found, especially chicken (*n.n. undeclared*) they were confiscated and the owner fined. Such cases happened in our village too, especially with chicken, which women didn't usually declare, and other times didn't even mind about them" (Pașca, 1982).

On this day, the people had the "fortune" to find out, in the afternoon, on the radio and TV, that all food prices would increase. Prices increased by circa 35%, but in some cases it was by 80-90%. The support given on this occasion was much smaller than the increase in prices. Peasants working for CAPs were the ones hit worst by this measure. They were at least lucky that some had relatives working on different construction sites and brought some money. What will happen next, only God knows! In any case, we can't hope for better.

Recently, 100 sheep have died in Benesat stables, after drinking fertilizer water left astray. It was not a big waste as, after they died, and while others were dying, they were butchered and brought into Zalău, where they were sold to the people. This is how we end up eating corpses (Pașca, 1982).

"Food supply was very poor. If you want to buy construction materials, like tiles or cement, you could only buy them if you gave in return wheat or meat, which is why people patched their roofs the best they could.

Collectivization, made in this manner, was a big mistake, because it shook rural life, making the peasant feel like a slave, with masters dictating him what to do" (Pașca, 1982).

"Meanwhile, the largest crisis I have ever seen in my life is happening in our country. In the times I write this, there are great shortages, we have no gas for lamps, and the electricity goes off all the time. Thermo-electric power plants lacked fuel,

while in hydro-electric power plants, water levels dropped by half, because of drought. Soap, files, saws, detergent, kitchen ranges and many others were missing" (Pașca, 1982).

"This month, peasants were given some corn, and of course, they paid for it with money. There was a great argument, as the brigadier lady was hit by a woman, who was not guilty. She was trying to please everybody, as much as she could, just that this system will never please anybody. Although last year was a rich year in wheat, still, for 1983 they did not have corn grains to give to peasants for sowing. Until now, each spring, those who wanted to buy corn grains for sowing had to register with the CAP with the quantity they needed, and they would receive treated grains. Now, they registered again, but although they paid in advance, they were given the money back as there were no grains" (Pașca, 1983).

"The poor peasant never knows what he will receive for his work and then he tries every method to earn his existence. This is what caused the nasty habit of stealing, which some abused. Peasants tried to extend as much as possible the harvesting time, in order to be able to take something home illegally, but this only happened because they realized they would not be paid for their work" (Pașca, 1983).

"The energy shortage is so high that some factories only work a quarter of their capacity, and in villages, and even in cities, electricity is often cut. Houses are lit with gas lamps, but there is no gas, so people use candles which are also scarce. In some places, people use rush lights, like 100 years ago. Neither godparents, nor brides and grooms can't find candles for their wedding ceremony" (Pașca, 1983).

"A good thing was made by the management, on Christmas night they turned on public lighting, and this program continued all through the Christmas Holidays" (Pașca, 1983).

“Now the electricity shortage began again. Electricity is only given in the evening and over night, but there is no schedule to rely on” (Pașca, 1984).

“Beginning with January 1st, in some factories, people were sent home on unpaid leave, a sort on unemployment but without unemployment benefits. This happened because of fuels, electricity and raw material shortages. It is cold in the cities, in the blocks of flats, and many had to install stoves, taking the tubes out the window. Blocks of flats were not built for heavy winters and people were unprepared. Wood and coal are missing, not to mention fuel” (Pașca, 1985).

“A very interesting thing is that many workers offered to donate blood, only to benefit from a day off to spend Easter holidays with their families. It is not bad, but it is ridiculous and unfair” (Pașca, 1985).

“Something completely out of the ordinary is the shortage of pencils, so it is easy to imagine how well our praised industry is working” (Pașca, 1985).

Who are the “masters”?

During the communism, the notion of *master* gained a polysemy previously unknown, when the term “master” was used for people belonging to un-peasant rural categories (teachers, educators, priests), or those from the cities. The term did not have a pejorative nuance and it referred to elites. During the communism though, the term gained new nuances, as it was associated with a status position, as well as a work relation, in general, and agricultural work, in particular, but also with a place in the social networks (Kideckel, 2006, 154) generating secondary economy resources.⁴ The term continues to refer to people outside the village, especially those in urban areas, but also to

party activists, coming from towns, those doing non-agricultural work in general. On the other hand, the term takes on a stronger negative dimension, in relation to structures of a work ethic, “masters” being people who do not work, those who give orders, strangers to the realities of the rural world, which, in fact, they despise. Rural social perceptions about the “masters’ world” are built upon an attitude marked by ambiguities, on one hand, the fact that everybody, especially young people, try to escape the cooperative rural worlds, in order to go to cities and become “masters”, that is, to build social otherness away from the rural universe. On the other hand, “masters” are despised, as they carry a rupture of the agricultural world, greatly devalued from a social point of view during the communism, and the urban world, generating a more free society with higher income. Meanwhile, “the master”, arrived from the city, that is, the stranger, hates the rural world, the agricultural activities and peasant traditions, and he is the carrier of an anti-rural, modernist message, and an arrogant attitude towards those still living in the country side. It is interesting that the commuter, through his double nature, of individual working in the city, but still belonging to the village, attending CAP agricultural works many times, is not considered to be a “master”, even if he is seen as being “estranged”. Young people are going to towns, to become “masters” and only a few, with little education, remain on the “collective fields”; migration acts like a selective filter, mediated by education and age, through which the rural world remains populated by people with reduced educational competences and elderly. Here are some perception tensions and identity constructions, in Alexa Pașca’s diary:

“As far as older youth is concerned, there are almost none left, as in these times, most young people go to schools, high schools and universities – those who are

more hardworking and have some luck –, while those less prepared go to various professional schools, to become workers in factories and enterprises, and the third category, those who did not succeed anywhere, remain in the village, or on the “cooperative field”, as the CAP peasants call it. In fact, these are very few, and even among them, many go to work on construction sites, especially in Baia Mare” (Pașca, 1971).

The rupture between the new generation, detached from the rural world and carrier of new values, and the peasantry, manifests itself in the everyday, most habitual behaviors:

“Not only that young people stopped saying hello to others on the street, but they also stopped saying hello back to the older people, and what is even more painful is that his attitude is taken on by village teachers – men and women –, especially the younger ones” (Pașca, 1971).

The wedding, once a ritualistic moment of community solidarity, becomes a social cleavage space, of community disarticulation. It is a space generating social competition for a clear identity affirmation for those leaving the village. “Modern” music is an indicator or social prestige, of new social status, ostentatiously and despicingly manifested by those who left to cities. The rupture also manifests at the level of clothes, also a social status indicator:

“This evening (Pașca, 1976), two weddings have taken place in our village. One of them was of the daughter of Cormoș Ioan of Gheorghea Anichii Petri, who got married in Râșnov, near Brașov, but the wedding and the ceremony was held here, in Aluniș. The other one was of the son of Gheorghea Docuții, who married a girl from Baia Mare, and then settled there. These fact prove the desertion of villages. At the first wedding, there was a singer raised and living among the people, among peasants, and his singing was smooth and had that masterious sweetness

that our mothers had when putting babies to sleep”.

At the second wedding, there was modern music, with guitars, accordions, drums, clarinets and other instruments, that made an infernal noise, especially as there were also amplifiers that destroyed your ears. There were two people playing the violin, brought for the peasants, but they were covered by the others. These two were placed in a shed, while the “moderns” in the barracks built for the wedding. They were not far from each other, so the “moderns” covered them, especially as stubborn as they were about being the only ones to play. They wouldn’t even shut up when the wedding organiser asked them to. One time, they even replied in a rude manner, to be left in peace because singers like them are rare to find... there was another incident when the bride sulked (city girl, but with little culture, if any); nobody knows why, the wedding organiser couldn’t hear anything because of the noise made by “modern music” spoiling our ears.

After the people stood up to for dancing, peasants danced in the shed alongside their two simple singers, while the “young masters” beside their “great music”, as one of the singers mentioned.

Lets make them crazy with our music, maybe these fools will go away from here!

And indeed, for a while, peasants from the shed who enjoyed folk music could not dance anymore and mixed with the others, some requesting folk songs, others requesting pop music, that they almost started a fight; in the end, those enjoying folk music gave up, mainly peasants. As a matter of fact, the others, more numerous, were also sons of peasants, but it was like a disease or a stupidity rather, that if some went through more school, more apprenticeship or worked in factories, wore long hair and hippy trousers, too bellbottomed, while from the knees up they could barely fit into them. Those people did not like folk music, only the “master”

music. In fact, they did not like it because folk music requires a certain strength, lively passionate moves, which this new generation lacked, unable to make those moves that the true music and the true folk dance require.

Education is perceived as a status construction factor of dominance upon the peasant population, sickened and aged, and not as a competency generating factor, which contributes to the modernization of agriculture and rural world:

“Everybody think about going to the city, especially the youth, because in industry the existence is ensured. They all want positions, they all want to become masters. Nobody needs agriculture anymore, because here it rains, it snows, it smells like manure, and some young masters who studied agriculture walk around, expecting simple peasants, the old and the sick, to do everything, while they just order around” (Pașca, 1980).

During the communism, especially in its last part, political centralization was the greatest among Eastern European countries (Kideckel, 2006, 57), especially during its last period, after 1970. “State supervised almost every aspect of the society, from university registrations to publication, steel production, tractors and the building of apartments” (Kideckel, 2006, 58). This generated a pyramidal system, powerfully structured, having the party leader at the top, and from here, decisions were transmitted through a network of decisional factors, down to the pyramid base. The economical function of centralization was to supervise production, so as to drain it towards the higher authority structures. Yet its social function was aimed at the capturing of the entire population in a coercitive system, strictly supervised, that would turn it into an amorphous crowd, incapable of social contestation. In the rural world, the pyramid base was made up of the peasantry, submitted to a decisional assault, most of the time contradictory,

producing a Brownian movement, dramatic and absurd:

“The top ones started yelling at the lower ones and they, in their turn, wanting to show how hardworking they were, made a dash upon the poor peasant, so that he didn’t even know which way to go. I remember one morning, during potato harvesting, when a guy came and said potatoes should be left alone and all should go harvest the beetroot. That was in the evening. In the morning, some already left to pick the beetroot, but another order came and people were told to leave the beetroot and go pick potatoes” (Pașca, 1984).

Various “masters” came from *the county*, as people called them, to dictate and to direct work, which still wasn’t going well, mainly because people worked halfheartedly. Nothing mattered, people also worked on Sunday (Pașca, 1985).

The effects of the exhausting agricultural work at the CAP, associated with the rural de-socialization, generate the image of a grave-village, almost extinct:

“I went to Noțig. The village did not have the beautiful life it used to have. Here and there, one or two men sitting on a porch, while the rest of the village was fast asleep after the exhausting work during the week, especially now during harvesting. Not we have campaigns: summer campaigns, winter campaigns, spring campaigns, autumn campaigns, but things still weren’t going well. On Sunday, villages were like tombs, in which people could barely catch a breath” (Pașca, 1984).

Some conclusions

The collectivization of agriculture marked the beginning of the traditional, peasant-type village dissolution, and the peasantry’s gradual extinction in history. In the communist Europe, the “end of peasantry” took place through the brutal

interference of the communist state in the economic and social life of the peasant communities, bearing effects upon the property structures, work organization and goods distribution. At the same time, this interference produced effects upon the social relations and value systems; peasant-type social solidarity will be replaced by a new individualism ethics, generating social alienation and society atomization. On the other hand, a profound value rupture is produced between the survivors of the peasant social categories and the new

mentality agents of industrial-urban type. Agriculture, and rural life in general, will become marginal social realities, socially devalued, carriers of a long forgotten social reality. Some of the social action logics and value system built during communism will continue to exist in post-communism. One of the consequences of the new form of historicity inaugurated during communism is connected to the traditional, peasant-type village dissolution and the end of peasantry.

Notes

¹ Although the phrase “ontological dignity in history” might seem like a pompous linguistic construction, just as I have been criticized by some empirical historians, by using such a phrase I wanted to suggest the fact that, according to some reductionist theories, the communism represented a rupture in history, a hiatus, out of which nothing is worth being retained. It is evident that, from a sociological approach, I am against such perspective; communism is a moment in the Romanian history that we need to assume and to break it down for its internal logics, beyond any value judgments.

² In this study, the processes of agriculture and rural French area changes are examined during the 7th–8th decades of the XXth century, when in less than 30 years peasantry disappears, replaced by the development of a system based on large agricultural farms and the extraordinary explosion of productivity. Some statistical data are significant for observing these mutations which caused a real “de-peasantisation of the rural”: in 1963, French agriculture had over 1 million tractors, while in 1955 there were only 300,000; work productivity in agriculture increased between 1950 and 1980 by an annual 7%, which lead to an increase of 2/3 agricultural production. In 1960, a farmer produced the food for seven people, while in 1983, a farmer fed 40 people. The land merging processes, creating large agricultural exploitations, are parallel to the

great rural exodus: between 1963 and 1985, 800.000 traditional type family exploitations, based on small property, disappeared. Agriculturist population went through a fast aging process and natality rate decrease: in 1983, the average age of the agriculturist population was 53 years, while 63% of the agriculturists were over the age of 55, those aged under 35 being only 20%. In 1982, the average number of children per family was 0.9 children, while in the industrial area it was 1.4 children. Entire mountain areas were demographically vacanted; in the ‘60s, between 2,000 and 4,000 schools closed down yearly.

³ Ioan Augustin Goia highlights a historical constant of the attitude towards the extra-communitarian property within the Transylvanian village. This behavioural constant refers to the peasants’ attitude towards all that is considered to be a non-peasant, extra-communitarian property. In the medieval period, this attitude refers to the feudal reserve (*allodium*). After the agrarian reform dating back to the nineteenth century, when the peasantry is allotted with estates or fractions of estates, which had been previously in usufruct, the hostility addresses the remaining of the noble properties (forests, pastures, agricultural lands) that being feudal reserve did not make the object of the peasants land owning. The sabotage techniques for the extra-communitarian property are: product theft,

illegal deforesting, and setting forests on fire. Some of these techniques were aiming at putting pressure on the noble to sell parts of the noble forest to the peasant. Ioan Augustin Goia notices the fact that “after collectivization, following the process of separation of the individual from his land ownership, the entire state property will go through the same treatment from the ex-owners that was once applied only to the extra-communitarian property”.

⁴ By secondary economy, we understand the economy alternative to the official, socialist one; it is a hidden, underground economy, which through informal distribution channels distributed goods (food, construction materials, electronics or industrial goods), or even access to positions, for people within the network, who would have not otherwise been able to access such services through the surface economy.

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