

AGRARIAN RELATIONS AND THEIR EVOLUTION AFTER THE UNION OF THE PRINCIPALITIES

RELAȚIILE AGRARE ȘI EVOLUȚIA LOR DUPĂ UNIREA PRINCIPATELOR

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Abstract. *The agrarian relations from the Principalities before 1864 were unfolding within the agrarian regime imposed by the Organic Regulation, which limited the right of use of the land by the peasants and reserved to the masters a third of the estate as full propriety which prepared their transformation into absolute landowners. After the Union of the Romanian principalities in 1859, the most important measure was the agrarian reform of 1864 of Alexandru Ioan Cuza. In this document he abolished the hayrack and any other form of forced connection between the peasant and landowner and stipulated that two thirds of agricultural lands to pass in the propriety of the peasants.*

Rezumat. *Relațiile agrare din Principate înainte de 1864 se desfășurau în cadrul regimului agrar instituit prin Regulamentul organic, care a limitat dreptul de folosință a pământului de către țărani și a rezervat stăpânilor o treime din moșie ca proprietate deplină, ceea ce pregătea transformarea acestora în proprietari absoluți.*

După Unirea Principatelor Române din anul 1859, cea mai importantă măsură a fost reforma agrară din 1864 a domnitorului Alexandru Ioan Cuza. Prin acest act se înlătura claca și orice altă formă de legătură silită dintre țăran și proprietar și se prevedea trecerea a două treimi din terenurile cultivabile în proprietatea țăranilor.

MATERIAL AND METHOD

In order to make this study, we started from the ground that the existent agrarian relations in the economy of a state have a great influence both on the economic results in agriculture and on the other branches of the economy with which agriculture has direct relations. As a consequence, in order to answer the requests of this study, we have gathered all the necessary data from different statistic official documents (yearbooks, census etc) as well as from the economical literature. The data refers to the social-economical status of agriculture, the relations among landowners and peasants, agrarian crises both before and after each of the seven agrarian reforms which took place after the Union of the Principalities, between 1864 and 1990.

In order to process and interpret theses data we have used the methods of techno-economical analysis among which the comparison method, statistic groups, division and monographic methods. The processed data were interpreted using also the inductive and deductive methods.

The results obtained are presented in the next chapter.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

The Rural Law of 1864 was the beginning of a new stage of economical and social development, with direct implications on land systematization and organization. Thus, comparing the statistics from the summer of 1864 with the table of appropriation, we can see, on the whole country, differences from one category to another and that many bondsmen were totally excluded from the appropriation by the landowners.

An example in point is in Botosani county, where from 461 frontmost peasants with 4 oxen and who had the right of appropriation, there were appropriated only 117, and in Vaslui county, from 636 frontmost peasants with 4 oxen and 3907 poor peasants who had rights, there were appropriated only 126 frontmost peasants with 4 oxen and 3009 poor peasants.

A characteristic of agrarian economy of the Principalities was the extension, especially in the Romanian Country of the institution of leaseholders. Lease holding appeared as a social-economical phenomenon in the last part of the 17th Century and disseminated rapidly after 1829, when landowners abandoned their domains as they didn't have capital, agricultural inventory and intrepidity. Thus, in the Old Kingdom, from the estates of 50-200 ha, there were leased only 20,8% of the arable lands to 19,2 tenants among the number of landowners, and from the estates of more than 250 ha there were leased only 29,3% of the arable lands to 27,6 tenants among the number of landowners.

A characteristic of agriculture is the fact that landowners, and especially the tenants didn't incline to make investments, as they had many obligations which came from the condition of bondsman.

As a consequence, leasing was a source of labour in order to make valuable large areas of agricultural land that existed in Romania which were taken from dereliction from the growing necessities of the internal and external market and a modality of parallel development of a small agriculture oriented not only on subsistence but also towards commerce.

The Romanian agrarian structure before the agrarian reform of 1918 can be considered highly disproportioned, presenting two polarizations characteristic to the agricultural exploitations of feudal type. The agriculture of Great Romania in 1918 was highly marked by the general economical underdevelopment of the country, characterized by excessive bipolarization of agricultural structure, with a system of unilateral extensive production dominated more on neo-feudal relations than capitalist ones.

The agrarian reform of 1918-1921 was tackled and applied in such a way that the great landowners propriety was maintained, most of the peasants without a land or with very little land were not appropriated, and those who were, were imposed such conditions that in a month or less they lost all lands. Achieving the agrarian reform of 1918-1921 was an important moment on the way of developing the forces and relations of production in agriculture.

In Romanian agriculture in the period between the two world wars there continued to exist (as a consequence of the way in which the 1918-1921 agrarian reform was involved) remains of feudal relations, which were a great drag on the way of productivity development.

The development of capitalism in Romania's agriculture by passing the great landowners from semi-feudal farms to the capitalist one, by slow transformation and with a high variety of forms from one to the other, all this opened the way to intensifying the agriculture, a phenomenon characteristic to all the countries with capitalist agriculture. But, at the same time, as it adapts more and more to the requests of the external market, it becomes one-sided.

The leasing relations had a negative influence on the development of the whole agriculture because they deepened the exploitation of the working peasants by the landowners and tenants and undermined the fertility of the soil. But the harmful action of leasing relations was amplified by the interest fight among the great landowner who lease and the capitalist enterprising tenant, determining the appearance of an agrarian crisis.

One of the main manifestations of the agrarian crisis was just the great drop of the prices at agricultural products, the increment of the difference between the industrial and agricultural prices which got to the depreciation of peasantry made products, to economic ruin of the working peasantry and to its captivation by kulaks and usurers. So, if for example the cost of a hoe was equivalent of 6,5 kg wheat in 1913, it got to 10 kg in 1939, and the coat of a scythe that was equivalent with 5,3 kg wheat in 1913, it got to 24,4 kg wheat in 1939.

The agrarian crisis meant for the poor and middle peasantry a new growth of debts and a worsening of their economic situation. Making the agrarian reform in 1918-1921 by the ransom of lands meant from the very beginning a captivation of poor and middle peasants to banks, to kulaks and usurers in order to be able to pay on time the installments for appropriation.

In the period between the two world wars the social-economical and political situations in which the Romanian agriculture develops were against the practice of an intensive multilateral developed agriculture, as a consequence of excessive land fragmentation. So, agricultural exploitations with a surface of up to 5 ha represented 75% of the total of agricultural exploitations and 28,02% of the whole area of the country; at the same time the exploitations of over 100ha represented 0,38% of the total exploitations, but held 4,53% of the whole surface of the country.

Consequently, within the structure of land propriety, Romanian agriculture was characterized by extensiveness and unilateralism, all this being increased by the place on which the Romanian agriculture was within the international capitalist division of labour.

The Great Union, the creation of the national unitary state, beginning with 1918 there was opened the favorable frame for the development of cooperative movement.

CONCLUSIONS

So, having a view on the most important moments regarding the evolution of agriculture after the Union of Principalities, we can state that, from legislative and social-economical point of view, the fundaments of European and Romanian agriculture are based in the last three decades of the 19th century and the beginning 2 decades of the 20th century, through the agrarian reforms of 1864 and 1918.

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