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Rural Publications and Research in Bulgaria 1992

The main characteristic of scientific activity in the field of rural sociology and economy in 1992 in Bulgaria was the preference to publish in journals and newspapers than in books. The basic reason for that orientation was the great dynamics of rural life, of its legal, economic and political framework. That required a quick analysis and response to the changes in the transition from a socialist to a new social order.

The number of published articles in the specialized journals 'Rural Economics and Management', 'Economic Thought', 'Sociological Problems, Sociological Review' and the relevant newspapers is significant. There were several main problems which were discussed. They can be grouped into several issues: ownership rights and land, coop organization, its management and efficiency, the quality of life of the rural population and pollution of land.

The most often analyzed question was the one for the privatization of the socialist collectives. The problem is very complicated, as by law the land within the collectives has never been nationalized but the owners have not had the right to use it or even to receive some incomes from it. In the transition there is a necessity to define the land possession of each owner, as the land under socialism was cultivated in huge amassed tracks. This is a very difficult process as in 1946, that is, before the collectivization, 55.7% of all land possessions have been in the amount below 40 dk¹ and only 0.9% — above 200 dk. The land for agricultural cultivation was divided into 11 900 000 pieces with an average size of 3.6 dk. The private ownership of agricultural lands in the last 45 years was in fact abolished. That led to the liquidation of the peasantry as a class. The process of re-emergence of this class will depend on the new country's as well as on world realities. The research of V. Stankov *The Agriculture and the Social Consensus, in Economic Thought*, p. 26/39, N 4, 1992) shows that there is an enormous number of owners of land, but a significant part of them are working in economic spheres quite different from agricultural production, and they expect to receive high profits from the possession of land, at least in the amount

¹dk — dekar = about 1000 square metres

of 40% from the income of the collectives. That is creating many economic and social conflicts in the reprivatization process. The transition in agriculture could be smooth only in the case that a consensus is established within the group of the rural parties, between the agricultural sector and society and between the different types of rural activity. Then the variety of choices in the Bulgarian village can be realized.

The coop organization in agriculture is not an invention of socialism. There were 3594 rural coops at the time the communists came to power. Their laws from 1945 and 1948 supported the existence of the coop organization, as the economic relations between the owners of the lands belonging to the coop and the coop itself were maintained. But the formation of Labour Collectivities at the end of the 1950s led to the ruin of the coop organization as the owners could not receive anything for having their lands and property within the collectives.

The historical inheritance from socialism and from the time before its establishment defines in the transitional period the different orientations for the future agrarian organization. As a whole two major types of understanding prevail in the publications. The first one puts an emphasis on the continuity, explaining that a great mistake will be made in the process of agrarian reform if the positive sides of the now existing collectives are neglected and all of them are ruined. Authors as D. Savova (*The Development of the Agrarian Relations, in Rural Economics and Management*, p. 10–19, N. 1–8, 1992), V. Mishev (*The Agricultural Coop — Past, Present and Future*, [in:] *Economic Thought*, p. 42–52, N. 3, 1992) support the radical change of the collectives and their continued existence, others — as Dr. K. Kaneva (*Ownership in Agriculture and the Forms of its Realization During the Transition to Market Economy*, [in:] *Rural Economics and Management*, p. 19–27, N. 1–8, 1992) defends the family farms development.

Within the framework of the social time and social space of the village (V. Kozhuharova, in: *Sociological Review*, p. 1–10, N. 1, 1992) the quality of life of the peasants is changing very rapidly in the process of transition. Starting with a rejection of the socialistic perception that peasants should get lower incomes as they produce a significant part of the food products necessary for their families, as they receive additional incomes from their private yards and as the variety of their needs in comparison with this of the town inhabitants is lower, some authors (e.g. M. Anastasova, *The Quality of Life of the Peasants in the Contemporary Socioeconomic Conditions*, [in:] *Economic Thought*, p. 42–50, N. 8, 1992) analyze the decrease of the standard of life of the peasant population in the period of significant changes and defend the thesis that quality of life has to be scientifically defined on the basis of macro- and micro-economic and social factors knowledge.

The purpose of the publications in the field of land pollution aim to propose approaches and variants for the solution of the ecological and economic problems arising in agricultural production on the basis of a comparative

evaluation of the various methods for purification and recultivating of the polluted lands. The authors in this problem field: A. Alexiev, I. Penov, V. Koprivlenski from the Agrarian University in Plovdiv (*Ecological and Economic Problems*, p. 178–183, [in:] *Rural Economics and Management*, N. 1–8, 1992) propose balanced solutions having in mind the restoration of the damaged regions. Despite the fact that these problems are quite new for social scientists and economists, the possibility to solve them in the process of significant restructuring of both industry and agriculture contributes to their positive acceptance and solution.

The ideas and defended approaches in the publications reflect the participation of the authors in discussions of rural problems in the difficult and challenging period of transition. Quite often they involve a quick response rather than a scientifically proved theses. With the aim to describe and analyze the changes and compare the persistence in rural development, perceptions and traditions in the last fifty years, a research project was started in 1992 with the participation of C. Giordano (Fribourg) and D. Kostova (Sofia). On the basis of regularly repeated interviews with the agrarian elite and with leaders of collectives, coops, family farms, members of liquidation councils and of land commissions in the regions of Dobrudzha and Trojan and using archives and documentation analyses, the objective is to describe the content and the influential actors in the process of reprivatization of land, to analyze the ups and downs of the agrarian reform and to compare the consequences from Bulgarian case with the characteristic of a rural transformation from socialist to market oriented society. The results were reported in several conferences and are going to be published in a book.

The stage of socialist development in Bulgaria is over. The publications and research are reflecting the important characteristics of the transition from this historical period. For social science it is a brief time some relevant conclusions to be drawn. The proposed approaches and opinion are preliminary and changeable.