

Foreword

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The present volume is the result of an interdisciplinary collaborative project entitled *Transforming Property, Persons, and State: Collectivization in Romania, 1949–1962*, which we initiated in 1998. The project was the fruit of the extensive research each of us had conducted separately over more than three decades; we wanted finally to carry out a project together. In the early 1990s, while Robert Levy was conducting research on the life and political activity of Ana Pauker for his dissertation at UCLA, he identified numerous unpublished documents concerning collectivization. At the same time, we were each in the Romanian villages where we have worked for many years, researching the processes of decollectivization and postsocialist transformation, with the aid of oral histories. The convergence of these research themes suggested that the history of collectivization was ideal for a joint project.

This is a very complex subject, one far exceeding our joint capacities. Therefore, we formulated the project as a multi-disciplinary, collaborative endeavor and invited a number of Romanian colleagues to join us. We also invited Robert Levy, Michael Stewart (anthropologist, University College, London), and Linda Miller (legal consultant, New York and Bucharest). The disciplines included in our team were history, anthropology, sociology, ethnography, law, and literary criticism. Our main objectives in selecting our research team were to foster cooperation that was not only international and interdisciplinary, but also intergenerational. Toward this end, we invited a number of doctoral students and young researchers to join our project as well.¹

The methods we adopted combined techniques and sources from all the disciplines represented, with particular emphasis on archival documents, official statistics, legislation, and oral history interviews. In using these sources, we profited greatly from the different experiences and skills of our team members. The historians provided instruction on how to use archives—where to find the various collections, how they were created, what problems to anticipate—and the anthropologists, sociologists, and ethnographers underscored the necessity of careful research preparation within a shared conceptual framework. We discussed at length how to carry out the interviews, what kinds of questions all team members should pursue, and the categories of individuals we should interview. Seeking as diverse a group of respondents as possible, we included people of different re-

gions, nationalities, religions, gender, age (although most would have been mature adults in the years 1940–1960),² and social class—poor, middle, or wealthy, according to the categories created during the communist period—as well as Party activists, functionaries, and both peasants who joined collectives and those who refused to do so.

For this project, we conceptualized collectivization as a fundamental means for understanding the very formation of the Romanian Party-State, in contrast to its more customary conceptualization as an auxiliary to industrialization and urbanization (see the editors' introduction). Moreover, we emphasized that collectivization was not simply a top-down process, but one resulting from complex interactions between centrally created policies and their local implementation. We viewed the process as variable across space and time, and therefore selected a broad sample of research sites differing not just in religious and ethnic composition but also in economy, terrain, date of collectivization, and other related variables. Several of the project participants (Robert Levy, Linda Miller, Eugen Negrici, Marius Oprea, and Octavian Roske) focused on national level policies and practices (i.e., property legislation, requisitions, propaganda, and debates about the form collectivization should take). The others conducted case studies, working across a broad span of communities and experiences.

The geographical distribution of our research sites was as follows:

1. For Transylvania, Julianna Bodó, two villages (Armaşeni and Corund) from the area inhabited by Szeklers (now Harghita county); Călin Goina, Sântana commune (Arad county); Gail Kligman, Ieud commune (Maramureş county); Sándor Oláh, two villages (Sânpaul and Lueta/Lövété) from the former district (*raion*) of Odorhei (Harghita county); Michael Stewart, three villages (Poiana, Jina, and Apoldu de Jos) from Sibiu county; Virgiliu Țărău, two villages (Rimetea and Măgina) in the former district of Aiud (Cluj county); Katherine Verdery, the village of Aurel Vlaicu (Hunedoara county); and Smaranda Vultur, Tomnatic commune (Timiș county) and Domaşnea commune (Caraş-Severin county).
2. For Moldavia, Dorin Dobrinu, the settlement of Darabani (Botoşani county); Cătălin Stoica, two villages (Vadu Roşca and Năneşti) in Vrancea county; and Dumitru Şandru, the commune of Pechea (Galaţi county).
3. For southern Romania, Liviu Chelcea, Reviga commune (Ialomiţa county); Constantin Iordachi, the village of Jurilovca (Tulcea county), combined with a synthetic overview of Dobrogea region; and Puiu Lăţea, Dobrosloveni commune (Olt county).³

Coordinating such a complex project required several meetings of our research team. We held an initial planning workshop at UCLA (April 1999),⁴ followed by three working meetings in Timişoara (September 2000) and Bucharest (September 2001 and February 2003).⁵ For each meeting, participants were asked to prepare summaries of their research to date; these served as the basis for devel-

oping and maintaining a common language throughout the project. The Timișoara meeting was essential in consolidating the multi-disciplinary character of the research. Over the course of two days, we discussed in detail both the theoretical framing of the project and the two principal methodologies each participant would employ: intensive interviewing and archival research. At this meeting we also discussed the project's ethical requirements, as governed by the Human Subjects Review protocols of U.S. funding agencies (similar to Romania's newly instituted *Avocatul Poporului*, or People's Advocate). We thank Smaranda Vultur and the *Fundația A Treia Europă* (Third Europe Foundation) for organizing and hosting that meeting. Although the second meeting was disrupted by the events of September 11th, 2001, we were able to discuss everyone's progress at this mid-point of the project and to resolve some of the methodological problems that had arisen. At our final meeting in February 2003, we discussed the papers to be included in this volume.⁶ We are grateful to Anca Oroveanu and Marina Hasnaș, in particular, and to the New Europe College, in general, for hosting the third meeting and for administering other project-related matters.

As initiators of this project, we wish to express our great appreciation for the wonderful work and timely cooperation of our Romanian colleagues. We could not have assembled a more congenial and intellectually stimulating group, from whom all of us learned a tremendous amount. We are indebted to Dorin Dobrinu and Constantin Iordachi, who agreed to take on the burden of editing the papers for the Romanian edition of this volume. It was our good fortune and great pleasure to work closely with them.⁷ For preparing the English edition, we are especially grateful to Constantin Iordachi, without whose tireless efforts this book would never have seen the light of day. He assumed the bulk of the work, overseeing and correcting the entire translation with dispatch; he has our heartfelt thanks. Throughout the several years of its operation, our project benefited from the generous assistance of many persons and institutions. We are especially grateful to all those people who agreed to give us interviews on this often-disturbing subject, sometimes across multiple meetings that lasted several hours. Similarly, we wish to thank the funding agencies without whose support our research agenda could not have been carried out, specifically (in the U.S.) the National Council for Eurasian and East European Research (NCEEER), the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH), the National Science Foundation (NSF),⁸ and the British Academy. All the opinions, data, and conclusions included in this volume express the viewpoint of the authors and are not the responsibility of these funding sources. In Romania, all team members benefited from the use of their respective county branches of the Romanian National Archives, whose directors and staff we acknowledge here. Several of us were also granted access to the Secret Police archives, through the National Council for the Study of the Secret Police Archives (CNSAS). We are especially grateful to Andrei Pleșu, Gheorghe Onișoru and Florica Dobre for their assistance, as we are generally to the Council's Archival Directorate.

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press our gratitude to Silviu Lupescu, director of Polirom Press, who did not hesitate to accept a manuscript with dimensions nearing those of the phenomenon it treated. We thank Cornel Ban for translating into English most of the papers originally written in Romanian.

As organizers, our interest in creating this project was driven by a sense of urgency, concerning both understanding the socialist period and the methods suited to that goal. We fervently believe that understanding that system should be a top priority for historical research in Romania and elsewhere in Eastern Europe, for this analytic effort can contribute much to the further development of the social sciences. Interviews of people still alive are of crucial importance, for they enrich our knowledge in a way that is impossible in studying collectivization in, for example, the Soviet Union, where those who experienced that process have long since died. At the same time, the Communist Party Archives that have been made accessible provide unexpectedly useful information, even if they have a subjective and partisan character and represent a truth that is contestable. Combining interviews with archival work seems to us essential to grasping the complexity of socialism as a form of social and political organization. We hope this volume will prove convincing to our readers and will encourage future research.

NOTES

- 1 We brought into the project five Romanians from doctoral programs in the US and the Central European University, Budapest. Three were studying with us: Liviu Chelcea and Puiu Lățea with Verdery at the University of Michigan, and Călin Goina with Kligman at UCLA. We also added Cătălin Stoica, then studying at Stanford University, and Constantin Iordachi, from the Central European University.
- 2 Some of our interviewees had been adolescents or children at the time of collectivization. Their accounts sometimes contained details not present in those of their elders.
- 3 During the three years of the project, our research themes and the composition of our team underwent some changes. First, Zsuzsanna Török, who had initiated research in Odorhei, withdrew in favor of Sándor Olah, who had greater research experience in that region. Additionally, because Robert Levy's research covered only the first phase of collectivization (1949–1953), we invited Marius Oprea to contribute an article about the remainder of the process. We also asked Eugen Negrici to write about an essential aspect of the collectivization campaign: literary propaganda. Michael Stewart brought Răzvan Stan into his part of the research. Finally, owing to his vast knowledge and research experience concerning this topic, we requested that Professor Dumitru Șandru write a synthesis of the entire collectivization period, in place of his case study on Pechea commune. We wish to thank him here for this additional work. The papers by Negrici and Șandru, plus an additional overview by Octavian Roske, appeared in the original Romanian version of this work but were removed, with regret, to produce a volume of acceptable length for the English translation. We thank these three authors for their generosity in making space for their more junior colleagues.
- 4 Participants at this workshop were, in addition to ourselves: Sorin Antohi, Liviu Chelcea, Călin Goina, Robert Levy, Octavian Roske, and Smaranda Vultur. We dis-

cussed the broad parameters of the project and potential project participants. Our thanks to the Center for European and Russian Studies (now CEES) at UCLA for supporting this workshop.

- 5 We thank Michael Stewart for securing funds for these three meetings from the British Academy.
- 6 Throughout the extended research phase, participants communicated with each other via email or met informally as opportunities arose.
- 7 Throughout the arduous editorial process, they consulted regularly with us. However, they did virtually all the hard work.
- 8 The National Council for Eurasian and East European Research is funded by the Title VIII congressional appropriation to the U.S. Department of State; it awarded us contract no. 816-12g. The U.S. National Science Foundation awarded us contract no. BCS 0003891. These grants were administered through the University of Michigan. We thank not only these two organizations, but also Patti Ferullo and Linda Bardeleben at the University of Michigan, and Mary Jane Pica and Linda Schulman at UCLA, for their ongoing assistance. At the beginning of our field research, Gail Kligman was forced to postpone beginning her research; she extends her sincerest appreciation to Robert Huber and Morris Jacobs of the NCEEER for their support as well as to Virgiliu Țărau for volunteering his generous research assistance during this period.

