The Agrarian Reforms Introduced at the Middle of the 19th Century

Their Effects Upon the Modernization of Transylvanian Society (1850–1880)

Iosif Marin Balog

"Serfdom has been abolished once and for all and shall never return again."

Iosif Marin Balog
Researcher at the Romanian Academy's George Bariţ Institute of History of Cluj-Napoca, a specialist in economic and social history. Author of the book **Dilemele modernizării: Economie şi societate în Transilvania 1850-1875** (The dilemmas of modernization: Economy and society in Transylvania, 1850–1875) (2007).

The end of serfdom and the restructuring of agricultural ownership in East-Central Europe were complex and gradual processes which cannot be associated with a precise moment in time, but which occurred in close connection to the political and economic phenomena that marked the middle of the 19th century. The liberation of the peasants also involved the transition to a new agrarian policy, a product of economic liberalism, creating the premises for the adoption of a new system of production, in the absence of which no increase in productivity would have taken place.[1]

The agrarian reforms introduced in Central and Eastern Europe generated a considerable historiographical debate.[2] Without examining in detail the historiography on this topic, in its multiple and complex approaches, we shall nevertheless mention the fact that the paradigms of historical analysis deemed "fashionable" at one point or another are fully illustrated also when it comes

to the agrarian issue. Aware of the fact that agrarian relations developed in different manners in the eastern and in the western part of our continent, historians sought to explain the nature of these processes, and most of them contended that in Eastern Europe the system of agrarian relations served to increase the gap and caused the relative backwardness of Eastern Europe during the 19th century and during the period that followed.[3] The old interpretation whereby during the 16th and the 17th centuries the regions situated east of the Elbe River saw a "reintroduction" of serfdom—a "second serfdom"—was discarded, and the processes in question were considered to be the economic response produced by Eastern Europe to the attraction exerted by the Western produce markets, a response which began with the increased subservience of the peasantry.[4] In its turn, Eastern Europe experienced different developments in terms of its agrarian relations between its western areas (Bohemia, Hungary, Western Poland, Lithuania) and the eastern ones (Eastern Poland, Russia, the Romanian Principalities, the Balkans). The factor responsible for these differences were the market relations established and facilitated by geographic proximity and by the possibility to ship agricultural products by water (the Baltic Sea, the Vistula, the Elbe).[5]

The increased political influence of the nobles also played a crucial role in the introduction of feudal serfdom in Eastern Europe. In exchange for services to the central power, the nobles were given free rein in their dealings with the peasants. The state gradually ceased to interfere in the relations between nobles and peasants, but beginning with the 18th century it sought to regain its authority over the relations in question. Still, the non-interference of the state was not the only factor that strengthened serfdom. The increased market demand for farm produce came once peasants began to pay their obligations in money and paid labor became widespread, at a time of changes in production techniques and of increased pressure to grow those crops that were in higher demand. These measures generated huge profits for the great landlords, especially in the areas accessible by water, which were the first to become part of the greater market.[6] In the eastern parts of Central Europe, this phenomenon occurred much later, in the 18th–19th centuries, and on a smaller scale, generating significant gaps and leading to a different type of relations between nobles and peasants, relations essentially grounded in constraints that were not economic in nature.[7]

The agrarian reforms implemented during the second half of the 18th century brought little change, as the intention of enlightened monarchs to improve the situation of the peasants was undermined by the nobles and by the local officials. The nobles received financial compensation for the lost lands and serfs, at a time when the low level of the economy and the lack of capital would have ruined both the peasants and the production system itself.

The emergence of reformist movements at the middle of the 19th century and the increasingly vocal group of those who believed that revolution was the only way to bring about modernization turned the agrarian issue into the main objective to be achieved. In fact, both reformists and revolutionaries understood that one needed more than just a few measures concerning agrarian policy. Given the complexity of the agrarian issue they realized the need for a deep political, economic, and social transformation of the state. In those places where there already was a certain production of goods in agriculture and where money was already circulating, the emancipation occurred earlier. Decisive for the success of the agrarian reforms were the initial circumstances in each country or region. Where ownership structure before the reforms allowed for a rapid clarification of the judicial situation, the new initiatives had favorable results. On the other hand, where ownership structures were unclear and a lot of time was needed in order to eliminate ambiguities, mostly through a recourse to the courts, the reforms proceeded with difficulty and in a halting manner. For instance, in the Habsburg Empire and in western and central Poland, peasants were allotted larger sections of the land they had once worked as serfs. In the Romanian Principalities and in Russia, where lands had never been legally and clearly divided among peasants and the great landlords, the question was *whether* the peasants should be given land and *how much* land they could get.[8]

Of all the legislative measures taken by the Austrian state in the 1850s, the one that most affected Transylvania and had a decisive impact upon the modernization of rural society as a whole was the urbarial patent of 1854, later completed by other similar laws. In the case of Central and Southeastern Europe, historians are nearly unanimous in saying that a solution to the agrarian issue was a precondition for economic modernization, in the sense of a transition from the feudal to the modern bourgeois ownership system, thus creating the premises for the development of a market-oriented agriculture. Here, the "liberation of peasants" was one of the measures that had a decisive impact upon the social developments of the 19th–20th centuries. The measures taken in order to put an end to the old agrarian system and which are now designated by the phrase "the liberation of peasants" were called at that time "regulation," "redeeming of the serfs" or "property relief."[9] It was a complex, gradual process, and legislation only provided the necessary framework.

As early as 1850, the authorities in Vienna began to analyze the premises required by the future agrarian law of Transylvania. The bill was drafted by some of the most distinguished jurists of that time (Romanians, Saxons, and Hungarians): Paul Dunca, Ion Brad, Dionisie Cozma, Ferencz Kemény, János Gaál, Simon Schreiber, supervised by the referent for urbarial issues Josef Ritter von Grimm. The bill was drafted over a period of four years, after the investigation of jurisdictional systems and of the petitions submitted by the peasants and by the land-

lords. This was not a case of procrastination, but rather a mature reflection upon the circumstances in which the new legislation could be drawn up and implemented, an attempt to find the best solutions at a time when Transylvania lacked a clear registration of the various categories of property and had no land records.[10] Urbarial commissions were set up within the local administrative units, coordinated by the central commission in Sibiu (Haupt Landescommission). They were also responsible for setting the amounts to be paid as compensations and sought to broker free agreements concerning paid work and labor obligations between landlords and the former serfs, even before the law was adopted.[11]

Apart from the pacification of the province, the mission of Transylvania's Governor Ludwig von Wohlgemuth (1849–1851) also involved its economic reorganization.[12] It is in these terms that we must understand the text of Ordinance no. 35 of 27 November 1849, which assured the population that "labor obligations and serfdom would never return again."[13] The main principle of the urbarial law of 1848 is reiterated in Article 7 of the Constitution adopted on 4 March 1849, which clearly stated that "any form of personal dependence or serfdom is hereby forever abolished. Any servitudes and obligations deriving from real estate ownership are hereby abolished and banned under any form."[14] It must also be said that these provisions were reconfirmed and included in the "Constitutional Principles" of January 1852, which inaugurated the comprehensive reconstruction of the empire in keeping with the principles of centralism and neoabsolutism.[15] Measures had to be taken in order to restore agricultural production, which had been dismal during the previous two revolutionary years, and the former serfs were asked to show responsibility and dedication in their work. There was also a desire to pacify the peasants who, in many places, would not even hear about any obligations towards the landlords and had begun dividing up their estates, in total disregard of the state authorities. Under these circumstances, the text of the ordinance of November 1849 gains new meaning, and equally relevant is the moderate but straightforward tone: "Sloth is the worst enemy of the peasants; to conceal it, peasants frighten themselves with the alleged reintroduction of serfdom, and fail to reap the fruits of a toil that would help them a lot in lean years. So that everyone know the truth and cease to believe in rumors, I once again declare that serfdom has been abolished once and for all and shall never return again . . . Be industrious and use the time not spent working for yourselves whenever someone offers you additional work, and you will be able to save some money for your children."[16]

The rural peasant society gradually changed under the influence of the reforms, the effects being deep and irreversible. At least in a first stage, the modernization of the rural world was brought about not so much by the radical nature of the changes that occurred, but rather by their rapid pace. If under the Old Regime

change had been slow and an innovation required at least one generation before it was accepted within the system, under the new circumstances changes became much faster. The end of the old system of ownership, brought about in Transylvania by the agrarian reforms of 1854, led to significant changes in the social relations within the rural world, but also when it came to the economic relations between the rural world and the urban environment. Nevertheless, the economic legacy of the period from before 1848 left a deep imprint upon the rural world of Transylvania. This first generation had to put behind the nefarious effects of serfdom,[17] which required a difficult process of material and mental adaptation. The two components of the adaptation process operated in parallel, but not at the same pace. From the very beginning, we see a considerable gap between the production system, technology, market and the mentalities, in the sense that the latter failed to adapt quickly enough to the new economic reality. This situation had serious consequences, deeply affecting the process of modernization.

The rural world was faced with two fundamental problems: one was related to the low technical level of the agriculture, which could offer only low levels of production, while the other, deriving from the first, was the need to expand the surface of cultivated land. Overall, between 1850 and 1870, the surface of arable land increased by 293,609 jugera, from 2,161,345 in 1851[18] to 2,454,954 in 1870.[19] Similarly, hayfields increased by 185,661 jugera. The expansion of arable lands was achieved, on the one hand, because the price of certain produce had grown, and, on the other, because the population itself grew and plots were divided up. Where population density was higher, arable lands were extended mainly at the expense of pasturelands, but also in keeping with the structure of land ownership: the largest increases were recorded in the areas where smaller plots, ranging between 5 and 15 jugera, were dominant. Generally speaking, the process did not favor the poor peasants owning little arable land, as prior to the division of pasturelands and forests they had supplemented their income by raising more cattle on the commons. After the division of the commons, every peasant received a plot of pastureland in direct proportion to the surface of arable land he had, but was allowed, at least in theory, to plant anything he wanted on it. While the statistical data for the 1850s do not reflect the magnitude and the pace at which cultivated surfaces expanded, it is certain that after 1867 we can talk about an average overall expansion of arable lands by 9.71%.[20]

At the same time, the transition was made from three-field to continuing agriculture. This process had numerous effects which often went beyond the strictly economic field, reaching the sphere of human relations within the rural communities. The magnitude of this phenomenon is difficult to assess with statistical precision in the case of Transylvania. It is certain, however, that its dynamics

was affected by individual interests and by the strength of the community.[21] Gradually, individual interests became more important, as dictated by economic imperatives. Sometimes, isolated individuals acted without the consent of their communities, and even against the will of the latter, making necessary the intervention of state authorities. Documents speak of many cases in which wealthier members of the community tried to enclose their lands and grow crops, and were opposed by their poorer neighbors, interested in defending the pasturelands. The transition to a continuing type of agriculture was first achieved by the former landlords, interested in growing crops for the market.

We witness a gradual change in the peasants' attitude towards the land: land is no longer seen as a means of dominating others, but rather as a source of gain. The new nature of ownership feelings are also revealed by the tendency of some peasants to buy more and more land. The Transylvanian peasants from the middle of the 19th century saw the purchase of additional lands as a way to increase their wealth. As demand increased and peasants believed they could work more without incurring additional expenses, they sought to purchase more land. The 1850s and the 1860s saw an increase in the number of plots bought and sold. The value of arable land fluctuated considerably. While before the agrarian reforms the average price of one juger of land (about a quarter of a hectare, or three fifths of an acre) rarely exceeded 30–40 florins,[22] in the 1870 its price reached an average of 60–70 florins. The classification adopted with the introduction of the land tax defined four quality categories of lands, and the price varied accordingly. The proximity to the main thoroughfares or to the marketplaces was also an increasingly significant factor determining the value of one piece of land or another. The expansion of the railway network had a major influence in this respect, in the sense that prices were 20–50% higher in the areas situated close to a railway. Climate conditions, especially the unfavorable ones, such as the drought of 1863–1865, led to drastic decreases in land prices, as landowners found it impossible even to obtain enough produce for their own consumption—another indication of the fact that the "crises" of the Old Regime in agriculture influenced Transylvania until the 1860s and the 1880s.

The development of a more modern and market-oriented agriculture was fundamentally conditioned by the introduction in efficient agricultural machinery and implements. This process was also tortuous and hardly coherent, influenced by countless local factors. Still, in general terms, we can say that first and foremost we are dealing with an improvement in the old agricultural implements, to the extent in which that was possible: wooden and iron ploughshares, wooden harrows on iron frames, the widespread use of "standardized" factory-made agricultural implements, largely imported from Austria, such as scythes and iron pitchforks. The development of agricultural technologies was conditioned by a large number of factors, some of them economic in nature, such as the avail-

ability of cheap iron, and others less so, as in the case of the "social constraints": generally speaking, across the whole of Central and Eastern Europe, the intention was to introduce cheaper and more labor-intensive technologies likely to increase the productivity of manual labor, amid an increase in the rural population which automatically created a labor surplus.[23] The periods of heightened agricultural activity demanded, on the one hand, more efficient labor and increased speed in the performance of agricultural tasks, and, on the other hand, they granted the constantly expanding rural proletariat access to revenues likely to keep them safe from famine. This comes to explain why, more often than not, the opposition to the introduction of new tools and techniques likely to speed up agricultural work was greater in those areas where there existed a labor surplus. Then came the countless local peculiarities related to climate and soil, each region responding in its own fashion and at its own pace to the new challenges. For instance, wooden ploughshares remained longer in use in the mountain areas, and where the soil was sandy they were only replaced in 1880–1890.[24] The same happened in France, where these ploughshares were replaced sometime between 1850 and 1890.[25] In Transylvania we see the same fluctuating tendency to replace wooden ploughshares with iron ones, reaching its peak in the late 1860s and the early 1870s. Although in 1878 wooden ploughshares were still dominant in Transylvania, iron ones were gradually introduced, especially in the regions where the soil was favorable to such changes (Braşov, Trei Scaune, Sibiu) and where horse traction was also increasingly used. Statistical data from the mid-1870s indicate the gradual introduction of agricultural machinery but, as opposed to the other regions of Hungary, in Transylvania this phenomenon coincided with "the second wave of technological improvements in agriculture" (scythes for the harvesting of grain, iron ploughshares and iron harrows).[26]

We believe that, in a first stage, rural society was most affected by the advent of modern agricultural techniques at a mental level, in that peasants began to understand the value of time and implicitly of the possibility to gain more by making their work easier and more efficient. To give only two examples meant to illustrate the difficulty of this process, we shall mention that, in 1873, 19 of the 36 counties, districts, and seats of Transylvania had no steam-powered agricultural machines whatsoever,[27] and that iron ploughshares, rarely used around 1850, were found in only 30% of the farms 30 years later.[28]

Agricultural machinery was first used on the medium and large estates, which could afford such an investment in response to the higher cost of labor. Other reasons had to do with the increased efficiency and with the shorter time required by agricultural activities, because the expansion of arable lands demanded more work than what had been needed at the time when part of the revenue was generated by the livestock raised on the common pastures. Mechanization also came with the transition from three-field agriculture to continuing agriculture.

The landowners who first introduced modern techniques and machinery also adopted a new attitude, changing from self-sufficient farmers into small producers and acquiring a new understanding of the market. The individuals and the communities that chose to respond to these challenges managed to improve their living conditions in the space of only a few years. Nevertheless, in more ways than one the inertia of tradition and the pervasive feeling of mistrust proved to be stronger than the factors of progress.

It would be, however, a mistake to believe that the changes occurred in rural life derived exclusively from the introduction of new technologies and of modern production methods. Equally significant was the change at the level of collective mentalities, which saw the gradual emergence of a new work ethic. The change of generations also played a fundamental part.[29] The generation of the 1850s, familiar with both systems, began to be replaced in the 1870s and the 1880s by a new generation, born after 1848, familiar with the new values and more willing to embrace novelty. In a village, the reputation of a young man came not only from the size of his family's assets, as in the past, but also from his farming skills. The role of women also changed: the increased cultivation of vegetables and the introduction of new agricultural techniques led to a higher division of labor, and women became busier and busier. Hence the relative decline in folk art, explained by folklore scholars and ethnographers by the advent of cheap industrial products. In fact, there was simply no time to make such artifacts in the household. The agrarian reforms created competition among the rural households, not for capitalist reasons but rather for reasons that had to do with a heightened sense of ownership and with the belief that one had to do one's job. This competition first became obvious in the areas with a mixed ethnic composition and where the heritage of serfdom was less present: "Romanians picked up a lot of good habits from the Saxons and the Hungarians. Then came the former serfs or free men, the yeomen or the landless peasants of yesteryear, who had never done any real work and had not learned the basics of agricultural work, being instead a bunch of no-goods. This difference could be seen in the villages where these different categories lived in close proximity to each other and enjoyed similar conditions."[30] We see, thus, that a significant contribution to the technological modernization of the agriculture was also brought by the spirit of imitation and by the work ethic developed by each of Transylvania's ethnic groups.

Animal husbandry also felt the effects of the agrarian reforms introduced at the middle of the 19th century. The modern legal concept of property and its new economic significance changed the manner in which land was cultivated and also the manner in which livestock was raised. Extensive animal husbandry would still be practiced for many years to come, and productivity remained low, even when compared to other provinces in the empire: if in Lower Austria a cow gave

1,000–1,200 liters of milk every year, in Transylvania it gave no more than 425–570 liters a year.[31] Until the late 1870, dominant in Transylvania were the so-called "steppe cows," great as beasts of burden but with a low yield.[32] In 1871, the first cows of the Tyrolean breed known as Pinzgau were imported by the Sibiu Agricultural Association, which had also received 2,000 florins in state subsidies. Only towards the end of the century do we see a systematic concern with the improvement of animal breeds, high yield breeds being imported from Switzerland and from the western provinces of Austria. The changes in animal husbandry required the cultivation of fodder plants on additional areas. In a first stage, the lands scheduled to lie fallow were used for this purpose. Continuing agriculture was thus right around the corner. The surface of hayfields increased by 185,661 jugera between 1850 and 1870, while pasturelands covered an additional 200,000 jugera. On average, there were 2,5 jugera per peasant farm and 159 jugera for each large estate. Gradually, a cattle market developed, run by entrepreneurs specializing in cattle trade across the whole empire. The most significant advantage enjoyed by Transylvania was the possibility to export animal produce to the imperial markets, protected from foreign imports. As a result, between 1850 and 1875 the number of livestock increased by more than 100,000, amid a steady increase in the price of animal produce. Thus, between 1851 and 1867, the average price of a hundredweight of beef was 21,16 florins,[33] reaching 23,74 florins in 1867–1870, and 24,68 florins in 1871–1875.[34]

Sheep raising fared less better, and between 1850 and 1875 the number of sheep went down by 18.71%. The most profitable period for the raising of sheep had lasted until the middle of the 19th century,[35] as indicated by the statistical data concerning wool trade in the empire: if in the early 19th century it stood at 60–65,000 hundredweight, in the 1830s it doubled, reaching 140,000 hundredweight in the 1840s. In the following decade however, the figure was reduced by half.[36] Especially in the case of Transylvania, the reasons behind these changes reveal a number of interesting aspects pertaining to the modernization process, amid changes in the legal definition of ownership, in the value of arable lands, presently more lucrative in the context of a market-oriented economy. As we know, for centuries Transylvanian shepherds had used to take their flocks south of the Carpathians, to the Danube, and even as far as Dobruja, southern Bessarabia, or Crimea. Thus, the shepherds from the region of Sibiu and those from the Land of Bârsa would gain considerable revenue from sheep breeding and enjoyed the possibility to graze their flocks in wintertime in the areas located south of the Carpathians, in exchange for a moderate fee. However, the changes that appeared in the 1850s triggered the irreversible decline of this migration of flocks, reducing the number of those practicing it. Gradually, the legislation and the economic constraints introduced by the state restricted the movement of shepherds towards their wintering places and made it difficult to find pastures at reasonable prices.

With money exchanges becoming increasingly important in the general economy, the taxes and the customs duties paid by the itinerant shepherds saw an unprecedented increase. When the tenants, the civil servants, or the landowners in Wallachia realized that they could gain considerable revenue from these Transylvanian shepherds-merchants, they introduced many customs duties and other taxes. The customs regulations of 1852 consecrated the same state of affairs.[37] Equally restrictive was the law of 1865, which introduced a fixed deadline for the return of the flocks to Transylvania. If the deadline was not respected, the flocks were considered to have been exported and taxed accordingly. The fiscal nature of this law is quite obvious, and it came to complete the law of 1864 which had given a modern legal definition to the concept of land ownership. While in Hungary sheep raising declined as the demand for wool decreased and the cultivation of wheat became increasingly appealing,[38] in Transylvania the decline was essentially caused by the restrictions affecting the aforementioned migration of flocks. Besides, in Transylvania the traditional breeds were replaced very slowly. In this case, the process of modernization was determined by two categories of factors: on the one hand, the developments on the Hungarian market, on the other, the legislation and the administrative measures adopted in Wallachia, which directly affected the activity of Transylvanian shepherds.

The changes in the price of produce occurred in the empire between 1850 and 1875 reveal another facet of modernization and of the transition to a market-oriented economy, favored by the general economic context but, to a large extent, also by climate conditions. Practically, throughout the whole period in question, the climate was the dominant factor determining the price of produce, at a time when the limited transportation facilities failed to deliver the produce where it was mostly needed. If we look at grain prices in Transylvania between 1850 and 1875, we see two main stages, determined by the political context but also by climate conditions. Between 1851 and 1860,[39] prices saw an average growth of 14–15%, just like in Hungary. While on the Danube Plain production levels had increased significantly even prior to the agrarian reform, in direct connection to the beginning of Austrian industrialization, in Transylvania the general increase in grain prices between 1854 and 1856 was caused by the movement of the Austrian troops in the direction of the Danube Principalities. The price of wheat saw a most significant increase, from 3,39 florins in 1853 to 4,15 florins in 1854 and 4,5 florins in 1855.[40] It must also be said that between 1854 and 1856 Galicia and Bukovina experienced repeated crop failures.

The increase in the price of grain has often been seen as the reason behind the expansion of cultivated lands and the increase in production. In fact, statistical data fail to demonstrate such a connection: while that the law of offer and demand did keep the prices up, this happened because of the limited supply available.[41] In 1853, a cold and wet year, just like 1859,[42] the price remained high

as even in the Romanian Principalities crops were rather poor and there were limited possibilities to supply Transylvania with the produce it actually needed. On the other hand, 1854–1856 turned out to be very good years, long mentioned in the press as "the best years since the liberation."

Then came three years of terrible drought in Transylvania, between 1861 and 1864, and entire communities experienced a famine similar to those that had predated the modern era. Until 1864 the price of grain and of other produce remained very high, and it began to decrease only after 1866, with excellent crops obtained in 1869 and 1871.[43] Practically, between 1861 and 1870, the grain price index increased by 21%, far more than in previous years because of the aforementioned climate conditions, while towards the end of the interval in question the reason had to do with higher demand on the market. Furthermore, as in the 19th century transportation costs could represent as much as 80% of the asking price for produce, we see differences in prices between the various regions of the province. As the transportation system was modernized, the very mechanisms of the market experienced a process of fragmentation. While previously prices had been influenced by the access to markets and implicitly by transportation costs and by the arrival of wagon convoys, when transportation became cheaper the law of offer and demand began to gain the dominant position it deserved.[44] Participation in market exchanges was certainly conditioned by the size of one's lands and by the proximity to the urban areas likely to absorb a greater or smaller volume of farm produce. Statistics show clear differences in this respect.[45] In the regions located farther away from the major urban centers, only the medium and large farms (30 jugera or more) produced for the market. In areas such as the district of Braşov, more than 30% of the 29,430 landowners who possessed between 1 and 15 jugera of land systematically sent their produce to the market. Similarly, in the case of Cluj county, 25% of the medium farms systematically produced for the market.[46]

The increased purchasing power and the demand for merchandise in the rural world led to the arrival of merchants in the Transylvanian villages. More and more shops opened alongside the village pubs, and these merchants also became involved in the trade in farm produce.[47] Villagers no longer waited for a market day to buy commodities like candles, soap, sugar, frankincense, salt, etc., but turned to the merchants whose shops were open all day long and who would sometimes sell on credit. Shops diversified constantly and reached even the small, remote villages.[48] The rural world was turning "bourgeois," as land ownership increased and new attitudes were adopted. At least until 1875, statistics unfortunately fail to reflect the social mobility of the peasantry, as the investigative methods and the format of records differed considerably between one census and the next. In fact, existing sources tell us that in the first two decades after 1850, the

main coordinates of modernization had their origin in the rural world, superseding all external influences. In the new context, the violent competition triggered by the desire to make more money, but also by the threat of famine, was a permanent stimulus in the direction of adaptation and survival.

THE MAIN obstacle preventing the development of Transylvania's agriculture was not so much low productivity, but rather the structure of land ownership, still anchored in the feudal past. Just like in the rest of Central and Eastern Europe, in Transylvania the process of modernization operated differently in the rural and in the urban world. The rural households and the urban environment evolved at a different pace from one another.[49] On the other hand, the slow pace of industrialization failed to keep up with rural overpopulation. Then came the failure to put to good use the labor surplus available in the rural environment, whose pressure led to the slow adoption of modern technologies. Seen from this angle, the thesis whereby the increase in agricultural productivity is a prerequisite of industrialization no longer holds water.

The agrarian reforms significantly altered ownership structures. The Urbarial Patent of 1854 granted more than 1.6 million jugera of land to the former serfs, bringing an average 9,5 jugera to each former serf. The first three decades following the agrarian reforms altered existing ownership structures, amid the new economic context and the practice of the equal division of assets among peasants and small nobles, leading to a proliferation of the small estates and complicating the emergence of a rural landowning middle class. It must be said that during this period the large estates were never divided and sold as small plots (this occurred only around the turn of the century), and consequently little land was put up for sale. Whatever sales did exist were limited to small plots. At this level, the greatest effect was that of the enclosure of the common lands (forests and pastures), because after the liberation many families of poor landowners, who had a maximum of 10 jugera, found themselves in a new economic situation, some being forced to work as daily laborers. There occurred a natural and eventually necessary "selection" process, determined by the new economic context, similar to that in other regions of Central and Eastern Europe, where we see the same increase in the number of small and very small farms. For instance, in Lower Saxony, in the course of one hundred years the number of estates smaller than 5 hectares increased from 9,000 to 32,000.[50]

A first estimate concerning the new ownership structure was made in late 1849 and in early 1850, in an attempt to introduce a provisional tax on land, but it is largely incomplete and does not allow for a precise classification, by category, of ownership structures in Transylvania.[51] However, later data reveals considerable regional differences in terms of land ownership, as dictated by local

peculiarities. For instance, in Cluj county the small estates (less than 5 jugera) accounted for 44.07% of the land, below the Transylvanian average. On the other hand, in the seat of Sibiu, they represented no less than 77.2% of all the land, which does not mean that the landowners belonging to this category were in a precarious situation. On the contrary, the communities living in this region were among the most prosperous, as they obtained revenue also from other sources and practiced a more efficient kind of farming. In fact, the very small estates were dominant across the whole of southeastern Transylvania, representing no less than 70% of the total number of farms, far above the average for Transylvania. Farms ranging between 5 and 15 jugera of land accounted for 20% of all the land, and those between 15 and 30 jugera for 6.5%.

Generally speaking, in order to ensure acceptable living conditions—that is, to be safe from famine—, in keeping with soil productivity and with local possibilities, a household needed between 10 and 15 jugera of land. Even if in many regions peasants felt oppressed by the presence of large estates, the truth is that across most of the province the majority of lands were in peasant hands (in the former border regions more than 75% of the land consisted of small individual plots, the figure reaching 90% in the Sachsenland). However, the small estates were seriously affected—and the effects were already felt 20–30 years after the agrarian reforms—by their excessive fragmentation between the successive generations of heirs, which generated an agricultural proletariat working as day laborers and who depended on the small income generated by seasonal agricultural activities, remaining outside the modest process of industrialization and urbanization that occurred during this period. Their increase by more than 55% in the space of less than 20 years (1857–1870)[52] gave the impression of demographic pressure in the rural world, even if the population increase recorded during this period was not so significant as to exceed the availability of land.

Alongside the developments experienced by the small estates, which, as we have seen, turned out to be the most vulnerable during this period, we witness a number of changes affecting the medium estates, as wealthier landowners appeared following the sale and purchase of land.

In conclusion, we could say that the changes affecting the nature of property relations in agriculture and the new tendencies they set in motion altered the general dynamics of the agricultural sector in the direction of modernization, despite the inertia and the fractures that accompanied it. It was a vacillating but gradual development, which gave agriculture a dominant role within the emergence of a new type of society, as the rural world accounted at the time for the majority of Transylvania's population.

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Notes

1. Gertraud Haag, *Die Bauernbefreiung in Österreich: Ihre Entwicklungsgeschichte, Ökonomische und soziale Bedeutung* (Vienna, 1961), 217.
2. Emil Niederhauser, "The Emancipation of the Serfs in Eastern Europe," in *Eight International Economic History Congress* (Budapest, 1982), section B7, "Agrarian Reforms: Comparative Studies," 19–28.
3. Werner Rösener, *Ţăranii în istoria Europei*, trans. (Bucharest, 2003), 141.
4. The 33rd Meeting of the International Economic History Association held in 1973 in the United States was dedicated to discussions concerning ownership rights and their implications for the economic developments of the past three or four centuries. See in this respect *Journal of Economic History* 33, 1 (March 1973), devoted entirely to this matter, and especially Arcadius Kahan, "Notes on Serfdom in Western and Eastern Europe," 86–100.
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Abstract

The Agrarian Reforms Introduced at the Middle of the 19th Century: Their Effects Upon the Modernization of Transylvanian Society (1850–1880)

The changes affecting the nature of property relations in agriculture and the new tendencies they set in motion altered the general dynamics of the agricultural sector in the direction of modernization, despite the inertia and the fractures that accompanied it. The paper examines, through a comprehensive recourse to the statistical records of the time, the changes occurred in the ownership structure of Transylvanian lands following the Patent of 1854. The modernization process that followed is investigated in light of the effects of the aforementioned agrarian reform, attention being paid to the introduction of new agricultural methods and machinery, to the changes occurred at the level of collective mentalities, and to the developments on the produce market.

Keywords

19th century Transylvania, agriculture, agrarian reforms, modernization, land ownership