THE TERRITORIAL-ADMINISTRATIVE REORGANIZATION, THE OPTIMAL SOLUTION FOR THE INAUGURATION OF THE COMMUNIST REGIME IN ROMANIA

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ABSTRACT

After the Second World War the communist ideology became the only one solution for the Eastern European Countries which had the Red Army on their territories. The process of establishing the new regime in Romania required a long line of compromises on behalf of the Soviet authorities that had taken the power. These were transposed into a series of physical and moral abuses onto the inhabitants as well as by the legitimizing of such practice. The orders from Moscow imposed that communist leaders in Bucharest should replace all their opponents that still held positions of responsibility in the state, even in the least of structures. The only feasible solution for accomplishing these requirements in record time was to complete a new administrative, territorial, and implicitly constitutional reform.

KEYWORDS: communism, administrative and territorial reform, region, district

1. Introduction

“This problem of territorial-administrative reorganization, the problem of the reorganization of settlements, with respect to their profile, volume and structure, can be categorized as one of the great dramas in the history of mankind” [1]. This is the way the Romanian author and historian Henri Stahl was defining his enterprise to study the territorial-administrative units, analyzed from the perspective of the impact these units had had on the masses.

2. The First Steps Towards the New Territorial-Administrative Reform in Communist Romania

Beginning with March 6th 1945, the moment in which the first government led by the Romanian Communist Party (PCR) takes control of Romania, the country enters a period marked by a series of reforms that are meant to consolidate the power of the new regime. The key of the entire process is represented by the physical substitution of all of the members of the local administration that weren’t to be trusted, as much as of the administrative
model in which they were working. The new individuals which were meant to administrate the country were coming from two groups with totally different psychological and professional profiles. The first category was represented by a part of the old-time clerks who, although they had been educated by the old regime, could be very easily manipulated as a result of the fact that they had certain things to hide, an important place being occupied by the former legionnaires. The second category was formed of men who lacked training, were obedient, and could be easily controlled as a result of their lack of experience and indirectly as a result of their fear of losing their assigned positions.

On the 28th of March 1948, after the model imposed by the USSR and on the basis of Law 560 of 1946, the Communists organized the first elections after the proclamation of the Republic. These were won by a majority constituted by the Romanian Workers Party, the Magyar Popular Union, the Ploughers Front and the National Popular Party reunited under the banner of the Popular Democracy Front. As a result of these elections, the Democratic parties were practically eliminated from the Romanian political stage, their representation in the elections being a formal one. The two opposition formations, the National Liberal Party – Bejan wing and the National Peasant Party – Lupu wing together obtained just 3.5 % of the votes (the Liberals got 7 mandates and the Peasants just 2). As a result of this fact, the Communists started the total consolidation of power in state.

Just a week after the inauguration of the new deputies in The Great National Assembly on the 13th of April 1948, the new constitution of Romania was voted. This action took place long after the three months since the repeal of the previous constitution, the country working in this period without a functional fundamental law [2]. The referendum procedure of the new constitution took place in a highly alert rhythm, it being subjected to debate on the 8th of April, the text being previously published by the Petru Groza government in the Scanteia newspaper [3]. The new constitution admitted in its second article the important role played by the Communist Party in the fight for the liberation of the country: “The Romanian Popular Republic took shape through the fight of the people, led by the working class against fascism, reactionism and imperialism” [4]. The country’s new orientation was expressly mentioned, in the text being shown the allegiance of the Romanian society to a series of principles as such: popular sovereignty, the unity of power in the state, the representation of the people through a single elected body, the express recognition of the working class’s ruling role.

Excepting the problems that were connected to the country’s political reform, an important milestone present on the day’s order was the introduction of some elements that opened the way for the new administrative reform. Thus in the 75th article it was mentioned that Romania’s territory could be organized in regions, a territorial entity non-existent at that moment: “The Romanian Popular Republic’s territory is divided from an administrative point of view in communes, plasi, counties and regions. Through the law there can be brought modifications to this division” [5], fact that will happen in very short time.

The creation of the territorial entities was to be realized according to the “socio-economical complexity” [6] principle. Excluding the rhetoric of formulating these ide the result was the realization of some agro-industrial complexes which lacked by personality, which had as territorial limits various natural geographical details (mountains and water courses), which weren’t taking into account the interhuman relations established along the centuries.
3. The Function of the Administrative Structures at Sectorial and Regional Level

Through The Law of The Popular Councils, active from 13th of January 1949 the Great National Assembly was being invested with full rights to be involved directly in the administrative reform of the country. Accordingly to the 14th article of this law the members of this structure could decide the creation or the disbandment of certain counties, the modification of territorial limits, the changing of their names accordingly to the moment’s necessities [7].

Although the action of administrative reform of the country was being considered as level zero priority, Gheorghiu Dej took advantage of this context to contribute to the diminishing of his political opponents power. He managed to double the structure that was coordinating this project, both organizations remaining under the direct control of the Central Committee: “(...) the whole task of preparing the new territorial-administrative division of the Romanian Popular Republic’s territory, task immensely hard and complicated, will have to be made under the Party’s leadership and control” [8].

Although the State Commission for the application of the Popular Councils Law was created to serve directly for the accomplishment of this task, Gheorghiu Dej considered that it was necessary to personally supervise the progress of the reform through the State Commission of Planification, structure which he led until 1949. His successor to the leadership of the before mentioned structure, Miron Constantinescu entered into an open conflict with Teohari Georgescu president of the the State Commission for the Application of the Popular Councils Law. The two leaders were at the time overtly political adversaries. This thing contributed to the intensification of the subversive actions in the interior of the two organizations, Constantinescu and Georgescu accusing each other of the irregularities which appeared in the period of the reforms implementation. During the 4th of February 1949 meeting, Georgescu justified his precedence as a result of the fact: “(...) the project for the foundation of the State Commision, was first debated with the soviet advisors and there were some modifications through which is being requested to the Secretariat the creation of the Comission” [9].

In contrast to the State Commission for Planning which was aiming to identify realist solutions for the redrawing of the administrative map, CSALSP also had the task to organize the professional education of the staff from the territory which were to directly take part in the frame of the Provisional Committees for the Application of the Popular Councils Law. As a result of the straining of the relations between Dej and Constantinescu, Teohari Georgescu managed to win the Romanian leader’s sympathy and beginning with May 1950, after the 15th-17th of May Plenary, he takes the principal role in the organization of the administrative reform.

A problem which held the attention of the authorities which were coordinating the administrative reform of the country was the necessity of the creation of territorial structures for ministries or the central institutions which had no representation in the Popular Councils. The subject is analyzed by a commission formed by representatives of these structures. Thus on the 24th of July 1950, the Ministry of Finances organized a meeting in which there have been invited representatives of the ministries of Internal Affairs, Armed Forces, Justice, Metallurgy, Chemical Industry, Light Industry, Food Industry, External Commerce, Communications, Electrical Energy, Oil, Cults, Forestry, Internal Commerce, and also from the State Comission of Planification, State Comission of Collecting, State Comission of Standardization, Institute of Statistics, Centrocoop, Nationalities Department and the Publishing Houses General Direction [10]. These institutions had the task of
reducing the activity at sectorial level and directing the flow of activities towards the region. There had been proposed the deployment

Another element which had been given a raised importance was the regulation through law of the number of representatives in the leading structures of the Popular Councils. At chapter III of the Electoral Law it was stated that the number of the elected was going to vary according to the number of inhabitants and the importance of each community. In this way it was established that for every 5,000 inhabitants of Bucharest there should be elected a representative in the Popular Council of the capital, and that for every 2,000 inhabitants to be elected a representative in the leading structures of the sectorial level of the city. For the other territorial strata at sectorial level of those indispensable units for the function of the sectorial structures it was mentioned the following proportions: for every 4,000-5,000 inhabitants to elect a deputy at regional level, for every 1,000-1,500 inhabitants a representative for the cities assimilated to the region, for every 500-1,000 inhabitants a deputy in the cities subordinated to the region, and for the cities subordinated to the sectors (raioane) and for the communes at every 200-500 inhabitants [11].

The functioning of the Popular Councils was to be ensured by a staff structure which was to support the councils elected through the direct voting of the inhabitants. There were being proposed multiple variants for the creation and functioning of these structures. A first solution aimed at the creation of sections for each of the domains of activity subordinated to the president of the Popular Council. These would have to manage the activities of selection, verification and education of the staff regardless to the activity domain (members of the Popular Council, employees of the sections, didactic cadres, technicians, agricultural engineers, doctors, etc.). A second variant proposed the formation of some bureaus of staff which were meant to unfold their activity in the frame of each direction which were following to be subordinated to the Directions of Staff from the ministry of whose profile they had [12].

The first variant presented a series of advantages, of which there could be remarked the diminishing of bureaucracy, taking into account the lack of specialized staff which could correspond: “both under political aspect, and under the aspect of professional capacity”. Even with all these things being taken into consideration the function of these structure would have implied a series of shortcomings. Its clerks would have to manage activities in domains in which they wouldn’t have the necessary training. Even more than that, they should have kept the inventory of the activity and to take part to the training of several thousands employees. The too small number of staff would have jeopardized the training of the future instructions, as a result of the lack of the necessary time required to know them [13]. In this context and as a result of important internal pressure from certain staff members with important positions in the leadership of the party it was selected the implementation of the second variant which would have determined a specialization of the staff of the Popular Councils according to the respective domain.

Another important problem which has been debated at the meeting on the 1st of September 1950 was the marginal position of the party secretaries, which seemed detached from the activity of the leading committees from the structures in which they activated. The identified main cause was a result of their lack of experience which it excluding them as decision makers. The members of the Central Committee were assuming an important part of the guilt for the mentioned situation as a result of the fact that they didn’t get
involved completely in the work of development of new production capacities, developing commerce, of the production plan or the organization of cultural activities. This apparently negative situation was giving the opportunity for the leadership of the party to implement its men in the frame of all of the structures, to the detriment of the technocrats. The lack of contact between party members and organizing structures whose activities were invoked as cause for the diminishing of their importance in the frame of the structures they were part of. The main cause which didn’t allow them to involve themselves completely in the work of coordinating the masses was one that came from the old territorial-admistrative structure of the country. They bring into debate the implementation of some solutions according to the specific of which region had and to avoid as much as possible the situations in which it would have been done a mechanical repartition of the leading staff according to a pre-established scheme [14]. After the implementation of the new organizing scheme, the party structures brought into debate the fact it has been also achieved a threefold diminishing of the existing bureaucracy in the old regime, in the new organizing scheme of the country being included only 11-13000 party members. The solutions which were taken into consideration for diminishing the number of inexperienced staff were about attracting the technocrats into the ranks of the active party members. These weren’t supposed to be retired from production but only co-opted during the parting meeting, they remaining the employees of the same enterprises. The meetings in which they were supposed to take part were to be organized in their free time without affecting their activity at their work space. Also, there was being harshly criticized the promotion of experienced staff towards the centre on superior functions, a movement which would have determined a power vacuum in the territory. It was proposed that the number of the required staff to be covered through educating unqualified workers or peasants [15].

During the Plenary 5 of the Romanian Workers Party there was brought into discussion the possibility of uniting along an administrative line the city of Bucharest to the Ilfov region. This thing was being attempted for the easier realization of a transfer of staff with administrative experience from Bucharest towards the neighboring region, which was much less developed from an economic point of view. Even with all these things considered, they came to the conclusion that the availability of staff was being very much overwhelmed by the necessities of the two regions. This problem stirred a wave of controversies between the partisans on the two sides of those supporting the unification or of those, supporting the separate functioning of the two regions [16]. For many of the deputies the idea of Bucharest functioning integrated to a region seemed as unacceptable. Vasile Luca proposes a solution of compromise, the republican subordination of both regions through the election of a single party secretary, which could also be helped by two secretaries for each region. Each of the two subordinates would have functioned independently towards two one another through the two distinct regional committees. The model which was proposed by him was being inspired from “the experience accumulated by the Soviet partner in the process of administrative reorganization of the country”, where the capital of USSR Moscow was being lead directly by a single prime-secretary which also had attributions towards the adjacent region. In face of such arguments, a large part of the members present at the meeting agree to implement the option proposed by Luca. Amongst them, there were the leading members of PMR Miron Constantinescu, Chivu Stoica, Petrescu and Borila [17].
4. Conclusions
The attempt of implementing a project of administrative reform which could not a justification in a necessity or in a cultural model for the Romanian people resulted in a resounding failure. After several attempts of improving this project in the years 1952, 1956 and 1960, in the year 1968 there was going to be recovered without many regrets the formula of traditional structuring of the Romanian territory which had as its basis the county. At the present, Romania faces a new challenge presented by the new model of economic development which brings back into discussion a new territorial-administrative reform. The realization of a such an enterprise must firstly have as a basis the previous experiences out of which the great errors must be eliminated.

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