

STRATEGIES OF EXISTENCE IN RURAL ROMANIA SOCIALISM, POST-SOCIALISM, AND SOCIAL SECURITY¹

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This paper is based on field researches I have carried out in 2002–2003 in Nicolae Bălcescu village, Constanța county (northern Dobroudja)², as well as on my investigation in the National Archives – Constanța Branch³. The aim of the research was to reconstitute the events and social players involved in the land collectivization in this village, as well as the resistance and adaptation strategies the local people used to turn aside the state commandments, as it was done in one rural settlement.

Key-words: village, collective farm, Moldavian colonists in Dobroudja.

Our research methodology aimed, first of all, the qualitative data, the archive being dealt with only for searching confirmation of the collective memory on some landmarks of the recent history. Moreover, the research purpose, as designed before starting the work „in the field”, was to understand certain current situations and factual actions through the local historical events, as the latter still remain active in the collective memory. Subjects identify reasons of current situations in their collective memory, even in the times before 1878, when Dobroudja came into the territory of Romania (Şerban, Dorondel 2004). However, the influence of their intensity is growing with the presence of the recent history data, in our case, the

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² The village is located at 35 km farther to the NW direction from Constanța town. In 2002 there were there about one thousand households with slightly more than 3,000 inhabitants. Their livestock combines agricultural subsistence on their own lands with daily working on the *arendatori* farms, and commuting to Constanța.

³ I have started the fieldwork together with my colleague Ștefan Dorondel in 2002. One year after, Ștefan moved to other research areas. Still the lively discussions and fresh ideas during the field research influenced my views about the article’s topic. I owe thanks to Ștefan, but of course I’m taking upon myself the responsibility of criticism and the interpretation of facts. Most of the archive data were collected within the first year of the project. Following the replacement of the Director of the National Archive, Constanța Branch, we faced many obstacles, abusive and discretionary interpretations of Law of National Archives, a law purposely encouraging such kind of behavior. Therefore, we renounced to review documents in Constanța, focusing on the fieldwork and collecting data from local archives. I would like to express my thanks to the clerks of Nicolae Bălcescu Local Council, especially to the Secretary, for understanding the purpose of our project and granting help. The research was financed by the Grants of the Romanian Academy.

period of the socialist regime. To this effect, qualitative research tools, such as open interviews which refer to circular events of the overall community or of some social groups, as kinships, are circularly approached and fully adequate.

In this frame, the article's aim is to delineate the strategies to providing social security that the 'Moldavians' have worked out both in the socialist and post-socialist times. Up to the collectivization time, the village, originally called Danachioi, and having a Tatar and Turkish population, then called Ferdinand, received two massive waves of Romanian colonists. After 1878, according to the colonization policy in Dobroudja, which sought to accomplish the bureaucratic rationalization program of the Romanian state (Iordachi 2002), huge surfaces of farming land, up to 100 hectares for each nuclear family, were distributed to the families of the first wave of migrants. Coming from Southern Transylvania, they were used to transhumance on their road to Dobroudja. Between the two World Wars, a second wave of population has been settled down in the village, following the same colonization policy of the Romanian state. Coming from the poor, but highly populated areas of Moldova, from the Bacău area, they received 10 hectares each of farming land and a plot of 2,000 square meters to build their household. The inter-war 'Colonists' did have a distinct identity, based on a Neo-Protestant confession. One 'Colonist', who came at the very beginning in Nicolae Bălcescu, had adhered to the Adventist denomination. The third wave of colonists was the result of the enlargement, at the beginning of '60s, of the State-owned Agricultural Enterprise (*IAS*) of Nicolae Bălcescu. The need of workforce in agriculture has determined the authorities to bring farming workers from other regions. Almost all people of Nicolae Bălcescu have come from villages of Iași county, Moldova province, and they set somewhere at 2 kilometers from the village, near the former *IAS*, in houses built by the authorities. Unlike the second wave of colonists, who, being too from Moldova, are known as 'Colonists', this third wave is called simply 'Moldavians'.

Although less numerous, considering the village population, the third wave of arrivers is vividly present in the everyday life. There are of them no more than 30 families, but even so, they are perceived as one distinct group with different life strategies. During collectivization, the last significant event of the recent local history, they did not belong to the community. For this reason they are seen as somehow outside the community. However, their presence could be felt through their adapting strategies marked by an effective way to organize their lives. Interviews carried out with Ion I. Spiridon and his wife prove it up to a point.

Despite their being labeled as the 'poorest of the poor', the 'Moldavians', or at least a part of them, strove to adjust their needs to the resources they could rely on. This is a 'subjective' perspective on social security. It makes sense to highlight the institutions' place in this situation, therefore I fathomed the role of the state farm (*IAS*) in the socialist period, but the core of this work roots in the life biographies. The needs of the 'poor' people are filtered in the 'Moldavians' case by their span life, and this is the stake of the article's perspective. Nevertheless, the paper's final part focuses on the question of whether or not is it possible to ensure

social security in states with weak institutions like Romania – a situation known in most of the South East European states. The distrust of the people undermines ‘the schemes of improving human condition’ (James C. Scott) and put on the fore one puzzling map of ‘getting-by’ (David A. Kideckel) with current situations.

The paper revolves around the ‘Moldavians’ individual histories and emphasizes the existence and action strategies of everyday lifespan. Compilation of some narratives on ‘biographical ego’ functions not only for identity construction, but also serves to motivate some individual actions and commitment of risks arising thereof. Such practices come from the socialist era, but they are shared and used for years to provide the people with a minimal social security in the post-socialist lifeconditions.

We are damn poor! Looking of another life

The family of Ion I. Spiridon arrived for the first time at IAS on 2 November 1964, as Ion precisely remembers. Initially, he was the only one who came, but between Christmas and the New Year he brought his wife too. He owned a small plot of land, in his birth village, but he „did not sign” for the collective farm (*CAP*). He previously had run away from home to Bicaz, when a tunnel was in construction. He did not want to enter into the *CAP* because „I was young”. Land remained abandoned there. However, after that, he worked two years at the *CAP*. It was not convenient, because of „lack of money. They paid me 50 *bani*⁴ for one day-work”. They left, having been „poverty tormented our house was not ready ... We thought to leave for one year, to clothe, to finish the house. Then, one year passed, two years and after that... She (the wife – m.n.) worked as a milkwoman, the first of them” at that farm. At the beginning Ion worked as a watchman, then as a tractor driver. He left the tractor because they „had a son who died and I wandered about”, but still worked at *IEELIF*, the enterprise for providing water irrigation. He returned to *IAS* as a mechanic. They got on well with the *IAS* engineer who lived in Constanța,” now he is in Switzerland with his wife”.

When they came to Nicolae Bălcescu, Ion had a brother here, who hesitated. Then another brother came. The latter, on his retirement, returned to his native village. Ion has also another brother in Iasi county, in their native village, who has been head of the railway station and, being retired now, stood for local election in June 2004 for Mayor representing the ultranationalist Greater Romania Party. „He is a public person”, he is 53–54 years old. Ion is in touch with him, mainly by phone. They have other relatives in Bucharest, two cousins in Ferentari district⁵,

⁴ The *ban* is the hundred part of a *leu*. In the 1960s the average salary in Romania was around 700–800 *lei*.

⁵ *Ferentari* is today one of the most underdeveloped districts in Bucharest. It was formerly a village where the soldiers of the *ferentari* body of the army had received land from the state after the 1878 war against the Ottoman Empire. The population in this district is partly formed by Roma people, who settled there together with many migrants from rural areas.

workers, with their sons, except for one who is living in Câmpulung Muscel. His uncle, father of the two cousins, came to Bucharest as a worker in an oil factory, by 1945–1946 and bought one house lot in Ferentari. Another cousin, daughter of the brother of Ion's mother, lives also in Bucharest. Her son is “something big” in Bucharest. One of their daughters went to the secondary school in Piteşti and, on her way, she has visited that aunt of hers in Bucharest.

Ion's wife is also from the Spiridons' kinship. The fathers of them both were christened with the same first name, Ghiță. They are distinguished only by the name of their own fathers, Ghiță of Manda (Iamandi), who is father of Ion, and Ghiță Lupu, the woman's father. Lupu, that is “wolf”, was the nickname of her paternal grandfather „because he liked the forest”. Ion's wife has a brother, a former Prosecutor, now a legal adviser in Bicaz, Neamț, and a sister in Tarcău, in Neamț too. Almost the whole village of their origins is dwelled in by nexts of kin, „Spiridonești”. They are identified upon their place of living “on the hill, upward”, for instance. With the other Spiridons of Nicolae Bălcescu they keep the feeling of a relation, such as Victor, a cousin. Some of them came via Constanța, to the constructions of Nicolae Bălcescu, working as masons.

In their birth village, their kinships are large, but many of them have left. About 60 families came during the first two years, only from their birth village. Not all of them stayed, “built a house” and returned. Ion Spiridon and his wife remained because their daughter went to school in the Nicolae Bălcescu village. Then, the other daughter left the village and went to Piteşti. Their third daughter renounced to go to high school. She was afraid in December 1989 by the gunshots in Constanța. She did not graduate more than eight grades. All sisters married in Nicolae Bălcescu and two of them have bought houses.

After 1990, the liquidation of *IAS* left them in a dramatic situation⁶. Until 1994 they lived at *IAS*, in joint hovels, four houses in the same building. They lived there “believing the said houses will be sold”. They were still tenants at *IAS* and waited the houses to be sold. But, says his wife, „it is not nice here, no guard, no priest, no church, no doctor... Previously, when we intended to buy, it was quite well, thrifty people ... now, just scamps ... empty blocks...”. „At that time, about 30 families left”, says Ion. Some of them bought houses in the village. Houses of *IAS* were not sold, so they have chosen to move in the village. Daughters have already settled in the village. Chiefs from the farm also asked them not to leave the

⁶ In 1997, after the change of political power in Bucharest the former *IAS*'s manager had been dismissed. In the people's view the new director acted purposely to bankrupt the *IAS*. In fact, the debts of these state farms were big and the new government had been decided either to restraint them or straight to close all over Romania. The main winners of this game in Nicolae Bălcescu were the local *arendatori*, most of them in the families of former kulaks and landowners (*mosieri*). Amongst these *arendatori* there are a few ‘Moldavians’. In 2003 there were 43 households still living in the *IAS* (cf. Agricultural Register 2003. The Archive of Nicolae Bălcescu Local Council). They either hired as daily workers to the *arendatori*, who leased big surfaces of land from the *IAS*, or they commuted to Constanța town.

village. They thought yet to return to Moldova. But they have only one brother still alive in Iasi, says Ion Spiridon „our mother died, our father died”.

At *IAS*, living in those houses, they understand well with each other, “people joining together, reliable...”. Here too they never quarreled with people of the suburb “... even if they are gypsies... they are clean, do not take anything...”. Nevertheless, Ion’s wife would like to sell the house (they put a sale notice at the gate) and to move “closer to the downtown because here “there are no shops” and it is difficult to buy anything. Daughters live far away and the youngest daughter is unwilling to live with them. She would like also a downtown house. They intended to buy a flat in Constanța town, but Ion does not want to live in a block, because he likes to “kill time”. In their house instead Ion feels comfortable because, for instance, he has learned to make transplants in greenhouses covered with polyethylene.

They have had one house even there, “in Iași”. „We had three houses like this”. Firstly, they built a house on their marriage, his father gave them “on a rivulet, but we didn’t love it...”. They pull down that house, gave the good land of their father to be used as a garden by others. They achieved the second house in Iași too, with furniture removed from Nicolae Bălcescu, the roof iron plates being bought from Dorobanți, a village next to Nicolae Bălcescu. Their son died when they had decided to build that second house and intended to leave Nicolae Bălcescu. They spent thus only a New-Year’s Eve in it. After that, they returned to Nicolae Bălcescu, the furniture being brought back and given to one of the daughters. Subsequently, they sold that house for 7 million lei. They paid 17 million lei in 1994 for the house at Nicolae Bălcescu. That money came from the sale of the second house, savings being deposited to CEC bank, the former popular bank in the socialist period, with 80–120% interest, and the sale of a hectare of land was returned by Ion to his wife. The house at Nicolae Bălcescu has been acquired half with aforesaid resources and half paid in installments to the owner. A man whose mother lived in Constanța had owned that house. When she died, the man, in his capacity as heir, agreed to sell them the house. Installments were set over two years, but they succeeded paying within one year and a half (breeding pigs for sale, amongst others). They fully trusted in that man who was perfectly honest and even diminished the sum with a small amount because it was paid in less time.

The people who sold them the house are ‘Colonists’, originating from the Bacău area. They are the only ‘Colonists’ Ion and his wife are acquainted with. Otherwise, Ion is a good friend of Nelu Tărșoagă, one of the significant local farm leaseholders, and is much closer to Mihai Popa, also a local entrepreneur, but coming from the last wave of ‘Moldavians’. They are also relatives with Mihai Popa. Spiridon’s son-in-law is a nephew of Popa. The father of that son-in-law, Gheorghe Tănase, is a step brother of Mihai Popa. The mother of Popa „lived” with Tănase’s father. But they consider to be relatives... “whether you are a good person”. Popa was the second who moved, in 1972, from the *IAS*, into the village. The first was one Ion Buzgă. After Mihai Popa, a Condurachi came, who is

brother-in-law of Popa, and a few others. At the beginning, about 10–15 families have moved on their own will.

To what meaning these people have backed up their own life span, getting thus one kind of security half social, half intimate, but that has fuelled their resistance? Ion Spiridon has judged the ‘life’ project proposed by the socialist regime was not a ‘successful’ one. His ‘anti-socialist’ attitude has not been motivated by attachment to land property, but by an alternative life project, namely to have a decent house together with his wife and children, and “to be well dressed”. They have ‘imagined’ their basic needs and whether the resources they had on their native places did not complain on, looked for it anywhere.

Another dimension of their strategies of existence is the ‘running away’ from the roller of the socialist power. Utilization of work migration is a new strategy, at least in the collective memory of communities where those ‘Moldavians’ have come from. It proved useful in the case of those integrating in Nicolae Bălcescu and becoming owners of a quite prosperous household, as well as for the others, after 1989, when the roads to work migration opened outside the country. Renunciation to the old style of living seems to be a decision bringing long-term benefits.

A third dimension of their strategies of existence, a dimension that had also been attempted under the socialist regime, impacts directly on the success in the years after 1989. This is the use of local networks of traditional solidarity to achieve their goals. Unlike the ‘natives’, ‘Moldavians’ had not the capacity of using the local power and influence networks. And even were they to have them, it seems they would not have used them. Considering that, although most officials of the local administration came from families of such ‘Moldavians’, I did not find, in the interviews with the ‘Natives’ or with the ‘Colonists’, and so much the less in the interviews with the ‘Moldavians’, the record of any attempt of the ‘Moldavians’ of using such official positions. The ‘Moldavians’ strategy was based on ‘horizontal’ social relations, with close relatives, neighbors, friends, able to provide mutual help, managing to get out in terms of economical resources, including money, from one day to another. No less remarkable is the fact that they reached the pursued targets in spite of their marginalization, also after 1989.

Social security as an individual life project

The families in Nicolae Bălcescu’s *IAS* illustrate one „subjective” concept of social security that link the idea of needs to the resources locally available. That means the social security is one dynamic process of continuous adaptation of the needs. On one hand, I am taking up the premise that the need is one subjective construction and depends on the local contexts and cultures. Scholars argue the socialist regimes challenged the people’s ability to control over the individual, and local as well, scale of needs (for an overview see Thelen, Cartwright, Sikor 2008: 12). On the other hand, the overlapping of various resources transferred by the central

power to the ‘local state’ did not envisage the alleviation of these basic needs. Still, the people have inverted it and attracted in their personal life span. The *IAS* had functioned amongst the Nicolae Bălcescu ‘Moldavians’ as a working place, but also as a nutshell for accommodating their needs and biographies.

In Romania, the economy of scarcity and shortage the socialist regime has laid down after coming to power touched in the 1980s such a peak that many analysts put the falling down of Ceausescu on this account. Among the few approaches of this kind, focused on the direct liaison between the collapse of the Romanian socialist regime and the strategies of existence of common people, I dwelt on that authored by Katherine Verdery (2003). In the first chapter of her work, analyzing the causes of the collapse, Verdery examined the nature of the economic rationality of enterprises during the communist period. Authorities were not interested in integrating those markets leading to financial profit for the purveyors of goods, respectively related to the satisfaction of clients. The system’s ultimate aim was to control the distribution of resources in order to use them in achieving its ‘ideological’ purposes. The reaction of common people was to try to avoid that control by developing certain strategies of subsistence integrated into an economy of an ‘informal’ type, secondary, which even itself was not oriented by the ‘capitalist economy’ criteria, but rather by opposition against the ‘system’. So, the consumption of goods became subject to politics, as Verdery noticed, meaning that, when one pair of blue jeans was subject to acquisition, its price could reach the level of a monthly salary, due to the fact it symbolized both the defiance of the official regime and the differentiation from the policy of equalizing the individual needs⁷.

The consequences of the socialist state control were even farther reaching. One important goal of the socialist policies of ‘rationalizing’ the needs was to widespread one common ‘needs pyramid’. Everybody should have suited to that scheme in correspondence to the unique state plan of developing the country. Harsh measures like limiting electricity consumption and heating, or rationalization of food supplies were been taken. Still, the effect of these policies in the rural areas is puzzling. Common people like these *IAS* workers ignored the state ideology and got involved in answering what they esteemed to be their real needs. This is, in my opinion, their motivation of being meticulous and concrete regarding their life aspirations, as well as obstinate in carrying them out.

The case of the Spiridon family shows this sort of silent resistance, but put the spotlights too upon one intrinsic issue of social security concept. Having one house seems to be in their case the basic need alongside thorough life. On the one hand, to have a house in full property provided them with one sort of ‘subjective’ social security. On the other hand, the story of getting this house intimately webs with their life biographies. Moreover, the incentives to choose staying in Nicolae

⁷This type of economic irrationality explains the mass spreading of the Caritas ‘pyramidal scheme’. Verdery approaches this latter topic too (2003).

Bălcescu regardless their nostalgia about native places, root in the plans to organize their modest resources, like money, time, social relations, in order to have one *proper* house.

The appeal to the problem of controlling the needs in socialist Romania aims to discover the *rationales* of this behavior. The family pattern of Ion Spiridon was much wider in socialist as well as in post-socialist Romania. The sense of being socially secure strongly interweaves with the course of life biographies. In these terms, tracing the line of separation between social security and individual lifespan is difficult.

Unlike the ‘Natives’ and despite the earnings they got from the local authorities and central government (pensions, social assistance), people from the *IAS* had randomly used the local power and influence networks. They instead built up the strategies that were based on social relations of the ‘horizontal’ kind, close relatives, neighbors, friends, mutual help, in order to ‘getting by’ (Kideckel 2008) in terms of economical resources, including money, from one day to another. Furthermore, such a daily resistance has been transposed in projects of individual or family life that are the way they define the ‘*real needs*’ to be socially secure.

The fact that the ‘Moldavians’ rely less on the formal institutions, mainly local councils⁸, for getting some social security is challenging. Despite their being stigmatized by the locals as the poorest of the poor, the ‘Moldavians’ rarely ask the Mayoralty for social assistance. In 2003 for instance, out of the 43 *IAS* households there were only ten whose head, either woman, or man, received the state social help in money (*ajutor social*)⁹. In comparison, the total number of the village households who had received this kind of state assistance was 49¹⁰.

In the case of ‘Moldavians’ the social security is still based on the self-control of their basic needs. The *IAS* or what is still remaining of it in 2003 provides them with resources to fulfill these needs. In addition, there are the examples of ‘success stories’ like that of Ion I. Spiridon or of the few ‘Moldavian’ *arendatori*, which echo their lifespan. The experts observe that the former socialist farms have functioned after 1990 as agents replacing the social security policies, although the quality of social services they offered was low (Thelen, Cartwright, Sikor 2008: 7, 10). The *IAS* in Nicolae Bălcescu played the same role, but not only for the post-1990 years. As the Ion Spiridon’s case shows, in the socialist period

⁸ According to the Romanian legislation, the Mayoralties together with the local councils are the main institutions responsible to identify the ‘poor’ families in their locality, to propose lists with these families to the central authorities, as well as to distribute the amounts coming from the center after the approval of these lists. There are many abuses, mainly in regard to compiling the lists with ‘poor’ families, but also with the delayed distribution of money. There are situations when the approval of the lists and the money distribution overlap with the pre-electoral periods.

⁹ The Archives of the Nicolae Bălcescu Local Council. Annexes 1 and 2 to the Disposition 179/03.07.2003.

¹⁰ They were then 991 households in thorough village (cf. Agricultural Register 2003. The Archive of Nicolae Bălcescu Local Council).

too, the *IAS* was one life frame and provider of social security as well, beyond the state aims and schemes for using it as an economic unit.

In fact, on the one hand, the state authorities were aware and purposely acted to enhance the social role the state and collective farms played. It is known, at least in the case of Romania, that the socialist regime forbade even the idea of social assistance. That did not mean yet that poverty vanished and that marginalized people like ‘Moldavians’ were spared of it. On the other hand, the ‘original’ schemes the common people took up were to ‘domesticate’ (Creed 1995) the state plans, to intimate their local ways of functioning with their lifespan. This is because the ‘local state’ at least in the cases of South East Europe, is one matter of ‘cultural intimacy’ (Herzfeld 1997).

What kind of local state and social security?

The policies to providing social security underlie on the basic premise that one important part of the citizens are either poor or on the sensitive margin of poverty. This is being supposed too, that these people are aware thereof and eager to apply for the state support. Is this the situation of the Nicolae Bălcescu *IAS* people, in particular of the Spiridon family? The ‘ethnographic’ approach of the poverty intends to look at the life trajectories of those who fell into poverty (Stănculescu, Berevoescu ed., 2004). Thus, the poverty is a matter of *becoming poor*, of losing the self trust and giving up to the risk arising plans, rather than being ranked in one scheme of categorization (*Ibidem*: 367). In this sense, Spiridon family is not at all ‘poor’, being therefore placed outside the state action to provide social security. However, on the other side, their shifty mistrust in the state institutions seems to be indicator of a ‘culture of poverty’ (Oscar Lewis) that pervades most of the rural societies in course of modernization. In addition, the particular situation of land collectivization in the socialist period reflects their silent resistance against the state and fuels once again the mistrust in the institutions.

The family of Ion Spiridon could hardly be considered as poor, because not even they themselves think so. This is in fact the core of argumentation in my article. These people are dealing with one ‘subjective’ way of conceiving social security and play with it by prioritizing their basic needs. Whether this scheme the socialist state induced them via *IAS*, or it was resumed in the history of state modernization is one wider topic¹¹. Anyway the local state as it is imagined and

¹¹ It was keenly pinpointed the vital role the ‘cooperative system’ has been played to providing one minimal social security for the overwhelming rural society in the interwar Romania (.....). In the same vein, the scholars argue in the case of Bulgaria the „cooperatives developed as a parallel, “alternative” world to capitalism. They forged a powerful everyday and institutional subculture. Their dense network operated according to the rules of “soft” credit, their structures were repeatedly bailed-out, their banks extended in broad scale substandard loans and the weak cooperative units became “schools” for bad governance” (Abramov 2003: 6).

perceived by the people is a space of resistance, mistrust, and ‘humanization’ (Michael Herzfeld), rather than a reliable partner.

Somehow opposite to the Marxian theories, researchers of social history and anthropologists also have found the peasant societies rebel rarely and under completely unforeseeable conditions. More often, they choose to cloak their antagonism in forms of “moral economy” and “everyday resistance” (Sivaramakrishnan: 2005). The reason of this resistance model is due to suspicions that generally occurred in peasant societies in respect to social change, to imposing schemes “of human condition improvement” (Scott 1998), and also to collective mobilization through political ideologies (Shanin 1982). Intrusion of the state nation, with politicians, bureaucrats, entrepreneurs and all institutions and formal rules on which they speak about, is perceived by the ‘villagers’ as “a fall of social harmony” (Herzfeld 1997: 34). Reaction of ‘ordinary people’ is not of reinstated such hypothetical social harmony, but to preserve in various ways “the intimacies that lie behind it”. The state nation and those composing or representing it in the eyes of ‘villagers’ is “humanized”, so “such creative mischief both subverts and sustains the authority of the state” (Ibidem: 35)¹².

The “domestication” of the socialist project (Creed 1995) roots in the lasting resistance the rural societies have raised against the state and its institutions. Reaching the ‘grass blade’, the socialist planning of modernization has been managed by groups of local power, on one traditional type solidarity, based on informal networks, often of clientage, kinship, territory. On the other hand, such a daily resistance has been transposed in projects of individual or family life only. Continuous pressure of socialist power and recurrent attempts of running the ‘collectivization’ of consciences led to a “socialist individualism” type (Koleva 2000), fully different from the ‘new man’ model targeted by the socialist ideology. Oral history researches, as the one referred to in this paper, emphasize the existence and action strategies of the said type. Compilation of some narrative speeches on ‘biographical ego’ functions not only for identity construction, but also serves to motivate some individual actions and commitment of risks arising thereof. Such speeches come from the history of state modernization, cross the socialist epoch, and their structure and functions are used for years after the downfall of the socialist regime.

The institutions and state policies prove to be ineffective in the cases of the weak states. The people have to rely on their own and to adapt their expectations to the balance of needs and resources. This situation challenges the theoretical reflection in the sense of possibility to work out further wide theories on social

¹² Despite the impetus of state centralization in the modernizing period in South East Europe and even before triggering the modernization program, ‘patriarchal’ patterns survived: “Centralization accommodated premodern social patterns. It well served the state’s power to control its territory and maintained its armed forces but did not in fact spur on development. Rural economies survived over generations while political systems represented a blend of modernizing and traditional components” (Bechev 2010: 151).

security. It seems the social security depends on the local cultures, on the way of representing the basic needs, and not in the least, on the ‘ethnography’ of the state.

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