

To my wife and daughter
without whose support
this book would not have been written.

Confession

This book has begun to take shape since the first days after the Revolution.

It is not a cold exercise of sociology on a given topic, rather the expression of a global intellectual and emotional endeavor that I feel obliged to assume as such.

I have always believed that I am obliged to contribute, through my profession of sociologist, to the molding of the Romanian society. After the Revolution, as minister in the first government to be democratically elected and as sociologist, I tried to contribute to the institutional and legislative reconstruction of the system and to the crystallization of the political agenda in the social area. The enthusiasm that I have invested in the new course of history was doubled by an ever-growing disquiet and bitterness. It is the process of passing from the hope that things will evolve according to the expectations of the population and good intentions to a reality shaped by a multitude of factors that could not be taken into consideration from the beginning.

The book is disposed on two distinct levels of analysis.

The first level refers to the organization of the science as such. Gradually, I have reached the conclusion that the transition needs a sociology that differs in many points from the present standard sociology. Societies in transition bring forth for sociology a completely new challenge: how should a process of global change be analyzed, the very change being accomplished through an action regulated by strategies, plans, programs? For the analysis of a society that changes itself and within which the decisions have a critical role, one needs a methodological and theoretical instrumentation different from the one generated by the relatively stable societies. The constructive approach, severely underdeveloped, must necessarily pass into the center of attention in the activity of the sociologists. Accordingly, I shall further examine here the problematics involved in the construction of a sociology that has as object the transition, more generally, a society constructed on the basis of a program. Such a sociology has specific themes: how the strategy of change is elaborated, how the lag between expectations and accomplishments is explained, which are the factors responsible for the successes and failures of the process of change, how the collectivities evolve and how they modify the strategic options.

The second level contains an attempt of sociological explanation for the Romanian society in transition. The book accounts especially for the results of my experience as sociologist during the 14 years of profound changing of our society.

I must admit that I knowingly violate the principles of a rigorist sociology, which require one not to formulate estimations on reality unless using a highly elaborated methodology and to withhold oneself from assertions that cannot be proven to a sufficient degree. As a sociologist, member of the collectivity, I believe it is my duty to formulate what I have experienced and felt, beyond what can be measured and probated with maximal rigorousness. In a period of revolution, experience is inevitably breached by aspirations and strong emotional attitudes. As such, the book may seem a bit moralistic. And I believe it is indeed thus, for the moral expectations are inevitably highly present in any project of social change. It is hard to point out where the lucid analysis of the sociologist passes into the emotional judgment of the human individual.

It is possible that my implication as a person be responsible for attitudes often trenchant, even peremptory in the appreciations that I make out on the process of transition. Not

being affiliated to any political body, the only source of possible errors is represented by my own thinking raised from a combination of aspirations, an experience inevitably partial and sociologically educated analysis.

The decision to publish this book engendered in me a spiritual experience close to the religious one. I confess, with a sincere feeling of repentance, my human vanity of expressing by subjective certitudes before my God, Who asks of me a certitude that we, humans, do not have access to. The only justification that I grant for myself is the act of sincerely asking all my colleagues, bound to me in the same fellowship of flawed human nature, for forgiveness for all my possible flaws.

Finally, the book refers to a historical period. Can it be accurately determined? It is clear when the transition started: the 22nd of December 1989. However, a fixed date when it will be over cannot yet be established. There is no global indicator that identifies the precise moment of the finalization of transition. The post-transition elements have already been crystallized and, lately, they have spread out and consolidated. But elements specific to the transition do exist. One could resort to an indicator at the level of collective awareness: the transition will be over when the collectivity will stop talking about it.

PART 1
The Transition of Romania and Its Evaluation

Chapter 1
The Transition as Projected Change

‘Transition’ – a Completely New Social Process

Alongside the other former socialist countries, Romania entered, as the result of the Revolution of December 1989, a profound process of transformation, currently coined as ‘transition’. The direction of these changes is the passage from the communist model experimented in the last 40 years (the Soviet Union even further back, since 1917) to the adoption of a new capitalist model, developed in the European-Atlantic region.

The term of *transition* is currently used in sociology with a rather vague meaning, signifying ‘the passage of a social system from one model of organization to another’. All the great changes, at a global and sectorial level, are designated with the term of *transition*: from the traditional societies to the modern ones, from the extended family to the nuclear one, from the handicraft wares to the industrial production. After the fall of the socialist system in 1989, the term of transition was adopted, in the current language, the political ideology, as well as in the social sciences, in order to designate the process of transformation of the socialist society into a capitalist society.

Why such an option? The usage of the neighboring concepts was not appropriate for different reasons.

The term *revolution* is used for three relatively different meanings:

1. the usual meaning is the one of “political change, usually through violent overthrow, which opens a structural change of the entire society”. It is sanctioned for the ‘French Revolution’, the ‘Russian Revolution of 1917’, the ‘Romanian Revolution of 1989’;
2. the designation of some technical/scientific innovations that have generated profound changes in the social life: *the discovery of fire*, *the discovery of the printing press*; or, more recently, with reference to the massive practical use of science and technological innovation: the ‘technical and scientific revolution’;
3. in the Marxist sociology, the concept of *revolution* designates a larger process: the profound structural transformation of a society, through the passage of one type of social organization to another. For example, the transformation of the feudal society into a capitalist society or of the capitalist society into a communist one. In this respect, the revolution is defined by global changes on a relatively long term, even if they were not initiated by a political overthrow.

In this last sense, as passage from one type of social organization to another, the term *revolution* would have been perfectly qualified to describe the changes from the ‘90s in the former communist societies. But is it likely that its Marxist aura made it undesirable.

Social change is a syntagma often used in sociology, which refers relatively unstructured and lax to any modification in the social life, more profound or more superficial, global or sectorial.

Due to its appliance to a much varied multitude of phenomena, it is perfectly understandable that it does not qualify to designate the profound structural changes that the socialist countries engaged in.

Evolution: a profound, organic change, 'one step at a time', through gradual cumulation, directed by general laws. It has a strong spontaneous character, unprojected by the social actors, being the result of continuous perfecting. Due to this unplanned, spontaneous character, displayed during long periods of time, through gradual accumulations into the mass of the system, the concept of *evolution* does not qualify either.

Social development represents a process within which a social system amplifies the potencies of its structure, without entailing structural changes: the economic development of a country, the development of the capitalist society etc. Obviously, this concept was also not appropriate, since it did not imply radical transformation within the structure.

The special meaning attributed to the term of transition in the '90s is the 'passage from the socialist societies to the capitalist society'. It does not focus on the description of the two types of society (socialist/capitalist) between which the passage takes place, but on *the process of change itself, from the first type of social organization to the second*.

From the point of view of its objective, the transition is not something new. The former socialist countries are in a process of assimilating the structures and institutions existent in the Occident. We are in the middle of a process of reverting to the pattern interrupted by the communist experiment.

From the point of view of the *process*, however, the transition is something totally new.

On the one hand, the transformation of a socialist organization into a capitalist one represents a new process, unexperimented in history up to now.

On the other hand, the transition is *a process of consciously projected change*, on the basis of a strategic plan. Only communism attempted a social construction based on a program, but it failed.

The society in transition, based on a program of social construction of unprecedented amplitude, brings forth before science a series of totally new problems: how must the science of a society built on the basis of a strategic program look like, how is this program produced, if it is correct or not, whether there are any possibly better alternatives, how are the difficulties and the unexpected failures of applying this program explained? Such an analysis promises to be interesting not only in order to make intelligible the processes of transition in themselves, but also from the point of view of the construction of a new science.

The Roots of Transition

The transition started not in 1989, but much earlier. I could say that it was triggered ever since communism was established, but on the level of effective reform of the institutions and structures of the Romanian communist society, but on the one of collective

consciousness, of programs of change. In the European countries where communism was introduced by the Soviet troops as the result of World War II, the new model of social organization was not accepted from the beginning by large segments of the population. Initially, the only hope was in the change of international political-military rapports, expressed in the popular hope that 'the Americans will come'. The activation of the search for directions of change can be pinpointed at the same time with the chronic crisis of the communist project.

The trigger point of such a process was the attempt of liberalization (the period of 'defrost') initiated by the devastating critique that Khrushchev subjected the Stalinist communism to, in 1956.

In Romania, the '60s are characterized by a strong pressure towards democratization, its most spectacular forms being: the fight against the cult of personality, the liberation of culture from the rudimentary schemas of the cult of personality, the growth of intellectual freedom, the initiation of the critique against dogmatic Marxism. The ostentatious parting from the Soviet Union engendered a new hope: an inner democratization no longer restricted by the control of the Soviet dogmatism. Thus it is explained why in the intellectual environments of Romania, the most active process of distancing from the Marxist dogmatism was produced in the '60s.

The year 1968 marked the end of hopes in the realization of some substantial reforms of the communist system from the inside. Three events can be identified for the triggering of the long-term regress of Ceaușescu's regime.

The first: the stifling of the Czechoslovakian experiment of 'communism with a human face' by the Soviet troops along with other countries endorsing the Treaty of Warsaw. The Soviet intervention represented a decisive warning for all the socialist countries: the unreformed Soviet Union will not allow any changes, regardless of their degree of significativeness, in the socialist system, commencing from its 'periphery'; and the Occident will respect the international *status quo*. Although the Romanian Communist Party did not participate in the repression of the Czechoslovakian experiment, but even protested against such actions, it tacitly took advantage of the Soviet threat to quell the attempts of reform from the interior.

The second event, also from 1968, passed relatively unnoticed in the euphoria of promoting the independence from Moscow and symbolical solidarizing with Czechoslovakia: the first manifestations of a new cult of personality. At the time, the fight against the cult of personality, not only in the Soviet Union, but in the communist regimes, represented a real chance for the opening of a process of democratization. Even Ceaușescu claimed ostentatiously to be against the cult of personality of the communist leaders and against all its forms of expression. In the manifestation of support for Romania's attitude of solidarizing with Czechoslovakia, for the first time there appeared panels with Ceaușescu's portrait. It was the moment of naissance of the new cult of personality.

The third crucial event on the line of 'closure' took place in 1971. The 'cultural minirevolution' triggered the offensive of Ceaușescu's regime against all hope of democratization and liberalization.

The entering of the socialist economy in a chronic crisis, more and more visible at the beginning of the '80s, petered out every illusion.

The crisis of the socialist system was not only the crisis of Ceaușescu's regime, but of the entire system. All the socialist countries, even without the yoke of dictatorships to irrational such as the one of Ceaușescu's, entered a structural crisis, proving incapable to surpass it: on the one hand, the chronic lagging of economy, by comparison to the Western economy; on the other hand, the impossibility to develop a real democracy under the conditions of opting for the principle of the 'ruling role of the Communist Party'.

Programs of Change in the '60s-'80s

The chronic crisis of the Romanian society enlarged the consensus on the idea that Ceaușescu's regime must be replaced. Moreover, a general feeling began to take shape in the whole of Europe that profound changes are necessary in the socialist system. Due to the international context, which could not be predicted at the time and represented the key-factor of any profound change, only quite vague directions could take shape, the conditions for their realizations being impossible to imagine. Which would be the direction and strategy of change and what type of society was to be promoted were questions that did not have prefigured a sufficiently articulated answer, and not only in Romania, but anywhere in the world.

Several ideological programs that began to be outlined can be identified:

- *Socialism without Ceaușescu*. The belief that socialism is distorted only by the Ceaușescu family and that it would be sufficient just a change of the ruling team of the Party was shared by a small number of communist leaders. Such a perspective, which seems highly desirable before the fall of entire socialist system, after it, was by no means sufficient. It can be assumed that Verdet¹, who tried even right after Ceaușescu's fall to constitute a new communist government, had in mind such a program.
- *A 'true'/reformed socialism*. The fundamental slogan of this orientation was: Soviet socialism – the more the one of Ceaușescu – deformed the 'true socialism'. The experience of the last decades triggered in the communist world a process of crystallization of a new communist ideology, but which was just at its beginning. More and more communists believed that important modifications must be operated within the communist model. However it was not clear how this *true socialism* could look like: probably more independence of the economy from the politic, freer market, political democracy, but still undecided if democracy could be promoted within the Communist Party that maintained its ruling role, or within a multiparty system.

The Western communist parties were in a more active process of ideological reform, but far from the realization of a new, sufficiently articulated, program. Actually, the Western communist parties did not succeed in adapting to the success of worldwide market economy, and even the less in conceiving an alternative to it, nor in solving the failure of constructing a new model of democracy that would credibly compete with the functioning Western democratic system.

¹ Former communist leader

Such an approach could be found among the firm communist intellectuals who defined themselves as reformers of the system. But I do not believe that in Romania this group was too numerous. Probably it was mostly formed by dissident communists, although many of them were already distanced from the concept of communism.

I do not believe the program of constructing a 'true socialism' was popular. The long-term crisis of the communist system generated such a negative attitude towards it, that new experiments did not hold credibility. As a proof, the Communist Party, which had over 4 million members, disappeared 'naturally' after the Revolution of December 1989. The quasi-totality of its members did not feel the need to reconstruct the party, but instead they just abandoned it. There was no influent enough group that would try to reconstruct the party.

But the crucial factor of detachment from the communist-type experiences was an external one. Just as control based on military force and international policy of great power of the Soviet Union was the factor that made the socialist system be accepted or perceived as impossible to replace, the beginning of the fall of socialist regimes, and especially the disaggregation of the Soviet Union produced an unblocking of the possibility of radical change. Of course, at the time, no one could foresee with certitude the direction in which things would evolve. What is certain is that an enormous opening for change had been breached. The maintenance of communism was no longer something unavoidable as regards the context. It was only in that moment that Romania gained its effective independence from the Soviet Union. Romania's independence, gained in the '60s, was limited by the collective belief that Ceaușescu could have been changed, not so the socialist regime.

In the new international context, Ceaușescu's replacement did not signify for the great majority of the population the repositioning of socialism on its 'true' tracks, but the opening of a new direction for a much more radical change.

- *The project of a gradual and open reform.* This project was centered not on a *model to realize* (reformed communism or capitalism), formulable from the beginning, but on a *process of change 'step by step'*, which would gradually lead to a new manner of social organization. The project was founded on some historical presuppositions: at least on the medium term, Europe will evolve on the lineaments of the two systems whose confrontation will be replaced with their approach, cooperation and, eventually, even *convergence*. In the '60s, the Occident itself had launched the *theory of convergence*: through a natural process, the two systems would gradually erase the differences between them, eliminating the components proven to be negative and borrowing from one another the positive elements. In time, the present structural differences between the two systems would fade away until a form of organization where communality predominates is reached.

In the uncertain international conditions, the promotion of some gradual changes, produced from within the communist system, not on the lineaments of classical ideological models (communism/capitalism), but on general principles such as

rationality, absorption of the most recent results of science, professionalism, modernization, democratization, seemed to be a productive strategy.

The history of socialist countries appeared to support a pattern of change characterized not on the radical and brutal removal of institutions. All the changes that took place in the past, even if stopped at a certain point, had a pattern of sectorial and gradual reforms, which, through accumulation, rapidly multiplied during short periods of time, reaching modifications that were not even dreamed of initially. It is the case of the liberalization from Romania, begun in 1964 and that had reached in four years, in 1968, through accelerated development, extremely important changes, in the area of mentality, ideology, especially in the field of culture and science.

Regarding the period of liberalization of socialism during the '60s, we could talk of a true movement of step-by-step reform. Those who honestly believed in a reformed socialism as well as those who believed in the reformation of the Romanian society, not necessarily in a socialist direction, met on the same position. A new intellectuality was formed, which, regardless of the fact that it manifested vaguely communist, anticommunist or noecommunist options, placed at the center of its ideology a reform based not on spectacular political overthrows, but on changes in the mass of the system, founded on more general values: rationality, science, professionalism, democracy. The growth of sectorial rationality appeared as a central strategy of reform, opening the perspective of liberation from the dogmatic structures and the incorporation of the positive experience from around the world.

Such an approach became more and more passive in the awaiting of *historical un-blockage*. The first step of historical un-blockage was the removal of Ceaușescu. His elimination, although the international context was not favorable to profound changes, nevertheless offered the country an extremely important space of evolution, which could relaunch internal reforms. The actual orientation would have depended decisively on the international context.

A special role was played by the specialists who occupied key-positions in the administration of society. They had acquired a certain authority and independence in the building of modern socialist society. In order to shelter themselves against political suspicions, the specialists developed a type of ideology of apolitic and technocratic stand. Still from reasons of political protection, the critical structural problems of the communist society were placed on a secondary focus level, the attention focusing on the change of sectorial components towards which the regime maintained a certain tolerance. In this context, the specialists tended to constitute themselves into a new social class, with a specific program: technocracy.

An essential point of the technocratic reformist project was the promotion of the principle of the *autonomy of fields of activity*, their removal from the tutelage of the body politic. The promotion of the own logic of the sectors of activity represented an important instrument of isolating the body politic, which until then had imposed its logic within all spheres of social life.

From a political point of view, the gradual reform could not be realized but through the enlargement of the democratic frame. Under the conditions where the

communist regime placed at the center of the political system the *undebatable principle of the sole party*, the only possibility of enlarging democracy was the one of the *principle of participative democracy*: not political participation at the top, but nonpolitical, at all the levels of social organization, especially in the sphere of social and economic organizations. It is not by chance that the Western approach on the democratization of enterprises became an extremely popular theme.

The official acceptance of sociology, excluded until 1966, as it was considered to be a 'bourgeois science', brought forth an indicator of the tolerance to change. And, in fact, the sociologists have been actively involved in the program of change, obtaining an accentuated positive image in the public opinion as promoters of desirable changes. Complementary to the reformist vocation, sociology began to push onward the process through the increase of critical orientation, action that it would pay for after a decade.

- *Ideology centered on the democratic process, and not on a model to be realized.* In the last period of the communist regime, its fall appeared to be inevitable. For many intellectuals, the questions 'What will be «after»? and especially 'What should be done «after»? became an obsession. The impossibility to foresee the evolution of the international context did not allow the elaboration of a somewhat coherent program. Nor did the Western experts foretell the radical changes triggered in 1989. The world configuration was the key-factor that could open a perspective or the other. It seemed more likely that the elimination of Ceaușescu's regime would take place long before any important modifications in the international context. The politics of reform, rather confused and limited, initiated in the Soviet Union by Gorbachev only generated the hope in an increased tolerance as to the whole system of reforms, but it was still far from allowing the socialist countries truly free options.

Romania was in a privileged situation of independence from the Soviet Union, but for a tactful dealing with the susceptibilities of the Soviet regime. The increasing pressure of the Occident on the socialist system was to enlarge the internal space of freedom of reforms after the fall of Ceaușescu.

The promotion of democracy as a central mechanism of change presented a decisive advantage. The option itself was left open, function of the new conditions that could not have been foreseen initially. The liberation from Ceaușescu's regime was considered to be an opportunity for the community to freely choose its own paths. The search of an ideological model was replaced with the promotion of democratic mechanisms that would, by themselves, produce the necessary changes. The announcement of the 'disappearance of ideologies', which had become so popular in the Occident, as well as in the communist countries, appeared to be very convincing in this context.

Such an approach created a large consensus on the post-Ceaușescu period. All the actors wanted democracy, participation, modernization, elimination of dictatorial and irrational forms of administrating the society. The values of democracy were incontestable. Instead of conflicts and suspicion, dividing into adverse parties and especially obsessive focus on identifying and punishing the responsible ones from

the past, the positioning on the path of changes with a collectivity united by the fundamental values of democracy and participation was preferred. Relying on a large consensus of change, dialogue and democratic techniques could avoid the segmentation of society and the further promotion of large agreements around gradual changes. The direction of change would have been provided through the mechanisms of democracy, of confrontation among ideologies. Moreover, not engaging from the beginning into a polemic with the communist program, the latter's possible brutal reaction was avoided.

Ceaușescu's fall, in the context of the fall of the entire communist system, conferred preponderance to the strategy centered on the democratic process. Liberated of Ceaușescu, the population began to feel free to explore the directions of the global social change.

- *The strategy of returning to the Western model.* In the context of rapid international changes, the option for integration in the Euro-Atlantic world actualized itself. Culturally and politically, Romania defined itself as a part of Europe. Such a position was quasi-generally accepted. Initially, the process of such a rapid integration was confronted with two points of incertitude.

The conditions of separation from the Soviet system were still hard to predict even towards the end of '89. The history of the last decades demonstrated the Occident had not intervened to support any socialist country that tried to break out of the Soviet system. The principle of 'peaceful coexistence', on which the two great powers had agreed in the late '50s, referred not merely to the relations among the countries themselves, but furthermore to the relations between systems. Even in situations of crisis, that could take hold of one of the countries in the system, the Occident was not supposed to intervene to support that country against the Soviet Union. The experience of the GDR (1948), of the fights of the partisans that lasted in Romania approximately until 1964, of Hungary (1956), Czechoslovakia (1968) and Poland (1980) solidly underpinned such a negative expectation. The changes were seen to be possible moreover through a gradual separation from the Soviet system, within a process of change of the entire system itself, and, most likely, through the drawing near of the two systems.

Internally speaking, the socialist countries were characterized by extremely complex institutional systems that could not be replaced overnight through a rapid restructuring. The processes of reform were itself hard to foresee, depending, on their turn, on the international context.

The crisis of the communist experiment brought the socialist countries closer and closer to the Western model. But the process through which a change in this direction was to be realized was not clear at all. Pushed outside any real political participation, the population could only record more and more bitterly the socioeconomic degradation generated by the crisis of socialism, complementary with the nostalgia associated the performances of the Occident.

Such an option we find heavily promoted in the politics of the Western radio stations dedicated to the socialist countries. In the '80s, in an accentuated manner, the politics of these radio stations was to subject socialism to a harsh critique, presented in contrast with the Western model. These stations did not pay attention

to the constitution of a concrete and feasible program of change. Their strategic option was moreover the consolidation of a progressive discontent of the population regarding the communist regime.

- *The scenario of returning to the Romanian society before the enforcement of the socialist regime.* After more than 40 years of communist regime, the few survivors of the political and economic elite of the pre-socialist Romanian society seems, in the public eyes, to have been disappeared long ago from the historical front stage. For the younger generations, regardless of their ideological option, the time of the pre-communist political figures was set. There did not seem to exist any least significant segment of population that would take into consideration a possible revival back to power of the remains of the old parties dissolved by communism and least of all a reinstatement of the property regime and the former institutions. A too long history had passed over all social arrangements for their reconsideration to have any sense at all. The attempts of organization of the former political leaders, practically unnoticeable for the population, and also for the intellectuality, were extremely timid, incapable of constructing a program of change for the existing structures. The fact that these small groups were under surveillance from the Securitate² accentuated their isolation. For this reason, they did not succeed in attracting supporters/members from the younger generations.
- *Strategies of despair.* Towards the end of the communist regime, the hopes in the odds for a 'step-by-step' change failed. The feeling that the communist system is no longer capable of tolerating/absorbing significant changes seized every one. Moreover, Ceaușescu's regime developed a special technique of taking over from the Occident many programs of change and promoting them within the communist system, in fact, emptying them of their substance. A single example: in the second part of the '60s, the communist government, using Western aid, initiated the program of 'scientific organization of work and production'. The program was gradually rendered void by the structures of communist economy, more and more irrational and politicalized. Social change was systematically 'stolen away' by the regime, transforming the most promising ideas into mere slogans of a system that became increasingly rigid in its dogmatism. On this background, two 'strategies of despair' were developed.
Moral solidarity as strategy. The failure of the program of reformation of the socialist system either in its posture of bureaucratic and corrupt conservatory dictatorship, of Brejnev's type, or in the one of personal dictatorship, of Ceaușescu's type, produced profound changes of ideological option. The action of step-by-step change of the socialist system became void of any perspective. The feeling of powerlessness to change the system generated a withdrawal from the *politic*, either in a *moral* type of attitude or in a type of *collective depression*, with desperate gestures. The only dignified and responsible demeanor was the one of a *silent anti-Ceaușescu solidarity*, a moral attitude of constructing an interpersonal

² The **Securitate** (Romanian for *Security*; official full name **Departamentul Securității statului**, *State Security Department*), was the secret police force of Communist Romania. The Securitate was, in proportion to Romania's population, the largest secret police force in the Eastern bloc.

environment unspoiled by the misery of the regime or of assuming a professional and responsible behavior in the own sphere of activity. Within interpersonal relations any pro-Ceaușescu attitude was strongly discouraged. And the attitude regarding communism was frequently expressed under the form of critical jokes.

The increased adoption of the values of science, technology and rational administration, based on efficiency, instead of the oppressive values of 'real socialism', generated a new type of individual attitude. Despite a chronic lack of hope in change, an essential condition of dignity and morality asked that every one act, in his sphere of life, in the direction of moral and rational reform.

More and more often appeared forms of dissidence, brave gestures of protest that were rapidly and brutally repressed. Towards the end of the '80s, due to the deepening of the crisis of the communist regime, as well as to the strong political and ideological pressure of the Occident for human rights, which limited the internal brutal intervention, the number of dissidents was rising. But all the countries within the socialist system, excepting Poland, were far from constituting a more or less significant organized movement.

Illegal immigration was the most popular manner of individual escape from the communist 'camp'.

Awaiting 'change through the cumulation of failures'. In time, a phenomenon was accentuated, that will prove to be full of durable consequences: a sort of *perverse satisfaction regarding the failures and lack of successes of the regime*. In the conditions of the impossibility to overthrow the regime through direct action, the only hope came from its collapse under the pressure of its own failures. The greater the failures, the closer the end of the regime. This is the explanation for a collective psychology of satisfaction for the failures perceived as being not of the collectivity, but of the regime. The failures were even considered to affect in a positive manner the Romanian society, as they represented the only mechanism capable to unblock, through cumulation, the change. The explosion of the joke culture, the fundamental principle of which was 'to kid trouble away', represented an efficient manner of expressing suppressed emotions and dignified detachment from the regime.

The Fall of the Socialist System and the Change of the Historical Perspective

The year 1989 produced a dramatic change of the historical perspective.

Perestroika and *glasnost*, promoted by Gorbachev, re-actualized the opportunity of reform of the communist system within its very core: the Soviet Union. The enthusiastic welcome of the new attempt to reform, in Romania as well as in all the other socialist countries, was due not to the program itself, actually quite abstract and unclear, but to the certitude that it definitely opened a certain new process of internal liberalization, and especially in what concerned the relations within the socialist system. It was expected that all the socialist states would be engaged in a process of reforms, whose limits were so remote that could not be foreseen. A large space of reconstruction was opened.

For Romania, Gorbachev's program of reforms has a special signification. It gave a serious blow to the internal support that Ceaușescu still had. Romania's independence

from a conservatory Moscow had a positive significance for the population. A reformative Moscow brought again into discussion the significance of Romania's independence. The first hindrance in the way of change in Romania became for the Soviet conservatory coercion, but the internal dictatorship of Ceaușescu. Romania became suddenly the only European socialist country not engaged on the path of reforms. The international context changed from a supportive one for Ceaușescu into a critic up to hostile one.

The last months of 1989 brought about a huge surprise. The Soviet Union, suddenly and unexpectedly, gave up its role of control over the socialist system. The socialist countries acquired an absolute freedom of movement: the fall of the Berlin Wall, immediately followed by the nullifying of Eastern Germany, the removal of conservatory communist regimes and the reorientation of communist parties in a different direction from the one of the Soviet model. Later on came the disaggregation of the Soviet Union, the final abandonment of Gorbachev's plan of reforms and the evolution of Russia in a confuse, more and more pro-capitalist, direction which led to the vanishment of the international socialist system, accompanied by upturns in the international military equilibrium. Central and Eastern Europe were suddenly out of Russia's area of control, the space becoming free for the penetration of Western influence.

A total change of historical perspective was produced. History changed overnight, entering a time of change with a rapidity that could not have been imagined even a few months before.

The Profile of the Strategy of Transition

The State of Mind of the Population as Source for the Strategy of Transition

The fall of Ceaușescu's regime, on the background of the fall of the entire communist system, placed before the collectivity the urgent need of clarification of the direction and strategy of change. In this context, the *strategy of transition* was crystallized, the key-element of all the transformations that followed. It covers the model of society to be built, the directions and principles of action, the programming of sequences through which change would take place.

The roots of the program of transition can be identified in the state of mind of the population from that moment after the Revolution:

- the sudden disappearance of the international limits of change: a programming of social change that would not take into account the former political polarization of the world became possible;
- the huge popularity of the Western model: the vast majority of the population aspired towards the assimilation of the Western model of social organization;
- the redirection of the political orientation of all the former socialist countries from the East (the Soviet Union) to the West, especially towards the European Union: Romania had parted from the Soviet Union ever since 1964, and this political independence, ostentatiously put forth, was extremely popular. In 1989 the next step towards the Occident could be taken;

- an anticommunist traditional ideological background, accentuated by Ceaușescu's regime: the catastrophic experience of Ceaușescu's regime definitely cured the collectivity of any illusions regarding the communist model. Only a negligible number of persons still dedicated to the communist model survived;
- the promotion of a democratic system and the exclusion of any political dictatorship: especially the specialists trained in public administration, in the administration of economy, of all the spheres of social life were oriented by the values of a *participative democracy*. They expected to be consulted, to have something to say not only in the great problems of the country, but also in their spheres of activity.

The high degree of consensus within the anti-Ceaușescu and pro-Occident orientation of the entire population offered a solid social foundation for engaging in the process of change.

Is There a Strategy of Transition?

In Romania, during the first months after the Revolution, as an answer to the need of defining the direction of change, a group of specialists was constituted, which elaborated a first draft of the strategy of change, adopted in April 1990, through a large consensus: *The Outline of the Strategy of Transition to Market Economy*. This document had the merit of formulating the main directions of change, representing a first exercise of democratic politics.

Besides *The Outline...*, there is no other document to contain the strategy in an articulated form. The fundamental principles and the adopted solutions that make up the actually employed strategy can be quite easily identified in the political programs, the ideological documents and the political decisions adopted during the course of transition. The strategy is defined and redefined constantly by the main political actors, as a result of the multiple negotiations as well as due to the confrontation with the continually appearing problems. Beyond the large diversity of strategic options of the countries engaged in transition, which can be noticed at first sight, there is a coherent and stable nucleus that we may find with all the countries and all the stages that make out of transition a unique path, with its successes and failures. This structural core is given, on the one hand, by the global economic and social-political situation within which the transition takes place, and on the other hand, by the authority and the power of the main actors engaged in the configuration and implementation of the strategy. In other words, transition is not a process dominated by different, even contradictory, orientations.

The coherence of the strategy of transition is given especially by the fact that the changes in the former socialist countries primarily represent an *international process* and only secondary a national one. The logic of the process of change in the former socialist countries from Europe must be searched first in a supranational logic. As such, the strategy of transition in the European area presents a *high structural communality* on which, due to a plurality of specific factors, a certain variation is produced that nevertheless has a secondary importance.

Three Layers of the Strategy of Transition

In the analysis of the strategy of transition of the various countries, *three layers* can be identified:

The First Layer is made up of the directions and fundamental principles of changes, directly generated by the socioeconomic and political structure of the actual world and the area where the considered countries are, different from other regions, for instance, Europe and even Asia, where former communist countries such as China and Vietnam are placed. For the European countries, herein is included firstly the fundamental direction of integration in the Euro-Atlantic world and the adoption of the Western model of socioeconomic and political organization.

The Second Layer is formed out of the strategic options of change for the economic, social and political sectors, promoted by the Western political actors in all the countries in transition. Their interests, ideological-cognitive stereotypes, socio-cultural orientations, fears and aspirations had a decisive contribution in the elaboration of this layer of the strategy, which also explains its high communality.

If in the first layer all the general directions are included, the strategy itself of the transition is comprised in the second and third layer. The strategy can be identified in the documents, the declarations and the behavior of the actors involved in the orientation of transition: governments, international institutions, social and political groups, with their representative formations (parties, unions etc.), specialists.

The Third Layer is highly specific for every country, if we agree that the first and the second layer present a high communality. It is composed of the strategic options of the national actors, with their own interests, orientations, fears and cognitive stereotypes. Nonetheless, it is the product of the interaction between external and internal actors.

In this first chapter, only the first layer of the strategy of transition will be outlined, while the second and the third layer are to be analyzed later on.

The First Layer of the Strategy of Transition: The Global Direction of Changes

The fundamental option, highly consensual, is the reintegration in the Western world of the former European socialist countries, set asunder from it against their will, as a result of World War II. The following aspects are taken into consideration: firstly, the change of the state-controlled economy into a market economy, integrated in the capitalist world economy; secondly, a multiparty democratic political system, after the successful model of the Occident. Reforms that are complementary to the new political and economical system are added in all the spheres of social life: social policies, education, health, administration. Finally, the integration in the institutional structures of the Occident: NATO, European Union. In Romania, country that is part – from a geographic, social and cultural point of view, by virtue of a long history – of Europe, such an option was clearly crystallized even from the first days after the fall of the communist regime.

In the sphere of economy:

- the constitution of an efficient market economy, in conformity with the logic of globalized economy: the globalization of the economic system is a process that one cannot withdraw from but through isolation, as the Soviet system tried to do. A country, especially one of medium size, such as Romania, cannot develop by itself new economic patterns, substantially different from the global ones. The entire world economy is itself in a continuous change, performed in a global manner;
- the privatization is, inevitably, the central element of the constitution of a market economy, and, at the same time, the main instrument for the restructuring of industrial units;
- the adaptation of Romanian economy to the economy of EU, as an instrument of European integration: here, the liberty of movement is even more reduced. Only the negotiation of the terms of integration is possible, and, after its realization, the contribution, along with all the other European countries, to the development/change of the common pattern.

In the sphere of politics:

- ensuring the liberty of the citizen;
- state of law, the law being the frame and the fundamental instrument of regulating social life;
- democracy, on the basis of the multiparty system, free elections and parliamentary system;
- the idea of partnership/dialogue as a fundament for solving the differences of interests and harmonization of the social actors, as a new, specifically European, component of democracy.

In the sphere of social policies:

- the assimilation of the common model in Western Europe – the well-being state;
- the assimilation of the directions elaborated by the EU: the construction of a new European society, founded on the value of *social cohesion* and promoting *social inclusion*, complementary with the *rapid reduction of poverty*;
- the growing coordination of social policies throughout Europe;
- the monitorship of social polarization, through the limitation of excessive inequalities;
- the social protection of social segments in difficulty, complementary with a policy of activization for them, through the promotion of social inclusion;
- a system of universal and highly comprehensive fundamental social services: education, health, occupation of labor force, social work.

In the sphere of the juridical system:

- the construction of legal instruments for market economy and democratic state, the lineation to the European practice, and, later on, the assimilation of the communitarian *aquis* as a pre-condition for European integration.

The National Variety of the Processes of Transition

At the end of this first chapter, I feel it is necessary to make a few remarks on the variety of the processes of transition.

Transition in the former European communist countries presents a high communality due to their position in the Western world, as well as to the adoption of a strategy of change to the elaboration of which the Occident had a decisive contribution.

On this background of communality, there are also important differences generated by the economic and geopolitical conditions and the internal political configuration.

The starting point was a society organized on a common economic and political model, namely the Soviet one. But still there were some differences among the European communist countries. Hungary had introduced important elements of market economy ever since after the revolution of 1956. And also Poland, during the '80s, had engaged itself on the path of some rapid economic changes. In Romania, Ceaușescu's political system was a combination of personal dictatorship and closure against any reform. At the same time, an economic complex characterized by irrational developments, organized and lead through rigid and inadequate political-administrative mechanisms, was inherited from the communist regime. The system of public administration was underdeveloped in our country and social security was built on a minimalist basis. (Zamfir and Zamfir, 1999)

The biggest differences, however, were generated by the position within the world geopolitical and economic context. The integration of the former European socialist countries seems to have been differentiated in advance and realized in several *stages*. The reason of the strategy for integration in stages I do not believe to be due mainly to the economic differences, and those of institutional development, but rather to other grounds. Firstly, it was due to the limited capacity of absorption of the Occident. It was natural for the integration to begin from the West to the East, from the close neighbors to the remote ones. Secondly, the stageability represented an efficient *pedagogical* instrument. It was important to create a competition that would accentuate the motivation for rapid changes. From the first wave of integration, the countries at the Western border of the EU were to be part of, to which the Baltic countries were added, with an extremely important geopolitical position, a favorable ethnic configuration, reduced dimensions, therefore easy to sustain, with traditional relations with Germany and the Scandinavian countries. Poland was a rather intractable country, but with solid relations with the Occident, and with a geo-strategic position that was vital to the latter. Slovakia was tamed with the threat to postpone the integration, function of the political orientation of the government, complementary with economic pressures. Romania and Bulgaria oscillated between the first stage and the next. They had a definite pro-Occident orientation, but their economic difficulties constituted a real problem, especially concerning the limited integrative resources of the Occident. In the next stage, the countries resulted from the dismembering of the former Yugoslavia and Albania were included. Russia represents a huge country as territory, population and resources, with an extremely important political and military position, much too difficult to assimilate. For this reason, the Occident was not very hasty in advancing on the line of inviting Russia to the integration in the European-Atlantic world, although it probably has this in view for a remoter perspective. In the case that it is received in the European Union, Russia would generate a multitude of political and

economic difficulties, as it still holds an economic, political and military power that the Occident would have a hard time to match. The other components of the former Soviet Union were left somewhat on a position of stand by: especially Ukraine, but also Belarus. The Republic of Moldavia was sacrificed, being abandoned between the two areas, in order to tactfully deal with the susceptibilities of Russia. Inevitably, it will be taken into consideration for the second stage.

A clear example of the importance of the geopolitical position is the orientation of Western investments. There are important differences among the European countries in transition as to the volume of these investments, which represents a crucial factor of restructuring and re-launching of the economy. The standard explanation of these differences offered by the Western specialists focuses on the degree of restructuring of the economy that would attract or reject the investors, as well as the Western support function of political performances. Of course all these are important factors. But in this explanation, a naïve presupposition is tacitly implied: the capacity of the Occident to invest is unlimited, being used as a type of prize for the will to reform. Actually, any capacity of investment is limited. Naturally, the investments have advanced one step at a time, the neighboring position presenting natural economic advantages, but also political assurance.

The political will to promote the reform in the Western analyses is a supra-dimensioned factor, containing more a pedagogical function than accuracy. The concrete dynamics of the political system has a much more complex effect on the whole process of transition, and it is to be analyzed in the following chapters.

A substantial analysis of the differences among the countries in transition we find in a study published by the World Bank in 2002, focused on the identification of differences of performance among the countries in transition and the factors that are responsible for them. It is shocking to find in this study a gross underestimation of geopolitical factors and the differentiated attitude, determined by specific interests, of the Occident regarding the countries in question. The image resulted is that of a class of students treated equally by the professors and who obtain results depending on their own merits. For the first time in such a type of text the negative effects of some strategic options are analyzed, which in the past have been treated as dogmas beyond any discussion – the retreat of the state, rapid reform etc. –, but it is constantly suggested that their adoption has moreover an internal paternity, the Western actors having no responsibility. The former chief economist of the World Bank, Stiglitz, published a book (2002) that takes a huge step forward in such an analysis, from the point of view of the critique of different strategic options, as well as the identification of IMF as the main author of the different recommendations with negative effects. But this analysis also is only partial. The ultimate responsibility of the internal actors is affirmed constantly, which, especially in the case of the European countries in transition, must suffer serious amends. The role of the World Bank, but also of the Western governments remains outside analysis in the same manner as the IMF.

Chapter 2

The Global Evaluation of Transition: The Economy and the Standard of Life

The Expectations of the Revolution

The fact that transition in Romania commenced with a revolution accomplished by an impressive mass mobilization gave way to a high level of expectations. The misery produced by the communist regime was expected to be rapidly replaced by prosperity. Irrational dictatorship was to be replaced by freedom and democratic participation. The whole society will be stabilized into new parameters, following a gradual growth in a positive climate.

The Outline of the Strategy of Transition to Market Economy (1990), the first strategic document elaborated, expressed an accentuated optimism. Towards the end of the first decade of transition, it was expected that Romania should join the ranks of the medium developed countries, with a solid base of ongoing growth. The main problem was that of the inherited economy, characterized by a high degree of irrationality and morally used technology. As a consequence, it had to be *restructured*.

As in all fundamental change, the difficulties are inevitable, but the population expected them to be rapidly overcome, with reduced costs. Optimism was founded on a series of favorable premises. Firstly, the enthusiasm, the political will and collective mobilization represented an important source of some rapid and successful changes. Secondly, the process of change into which Romania had engaged itself disposed of a credible strategic orientation, strongly supported by the international factors and based on a high internal consensus. Thirdly, the technical-economical structures inherited, although irrationally developed and outdated as to some regards, presented a high degree of modernity and were associated with a highly qualified work force, although with some deficits as to discipline. Finally, it was expected that the Occident should be highly interested in supporting the former socialist countries, not necessarily in a material manner, but especially in a political and technical one. Important Western economical investments were counted on, but also on a policy of support for the financial borrowings that would permit economic re-launch.

The Shock of Transition

But very soon, the Romanian society was confronted with a series of unexpected shocks. In all the spheres of social life the results were far from what was expected: the explosion of political conflicts, the downfall of economy, a growth of collective insecurity doubled by the chronic incapacity of public administration to solve the problems and to prevent corruption and criminality, finally, the explosion of poverty, the demoralization and alienation of the population.

The accentuate difficulties, in all the spheres of social life, enable us to talk of a *global crisis of transition*. Transition proved to be much longer and painful than initially expected.

All the countries in transition, the European ones, as well as, mostly, the ones that come from the former Soviet Union, have confronted, in different degrees, with such a crisis. Complementary with the global crisis of societies in transition, a *crisis of the theory of transition* took shape: how can the shocking failures of transition be explained, when all should have evolved according to the expectations? How can a correct strategy of reform, sustained by a large internal consensus and a substantial Western support, produce, when applied, such negative effects?

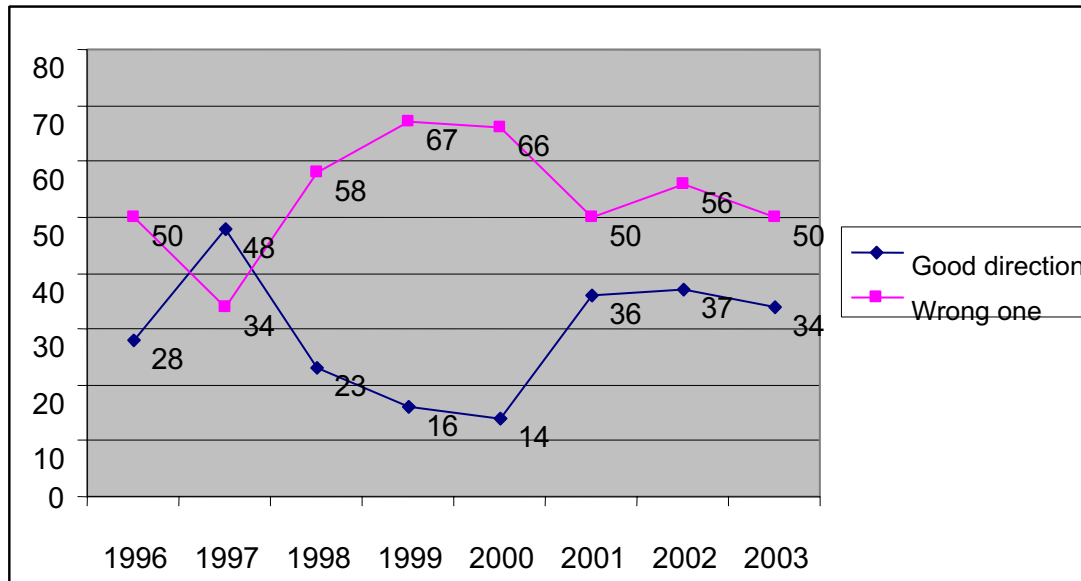
From a more detached historical perspective, it can be estimated that, probably, the rhythm of change was high, and the result, a success. The established transformations as an objective of transition were accomplished or are about to be. The majority of European countries were integrated in the Western world or are in a final stage of this process. After 2000, in the European countries in transition clear sign of overcoming the great difficulties are noted, as well as the entering into a normalized cycle of development. The countries that have made up the former Soviet Union are still far from surpassing the crisis. But all over, transition imposed disproportionately high social and economic costs, strong negative processes whose emergence was not expected in the theory of transition.

The fundamental question, asked more and more insistently, is: the failures of transition are caused preponderantly by the adopted strategy or by a series of factors that are exterior to it?

The objective of the present work is not to analyze in detail the *nature of the crisis of transition*, but rather the *configuration of the theory of transition* and its process of change, in its effort to explicatively absorb the unexpected crises of transition.

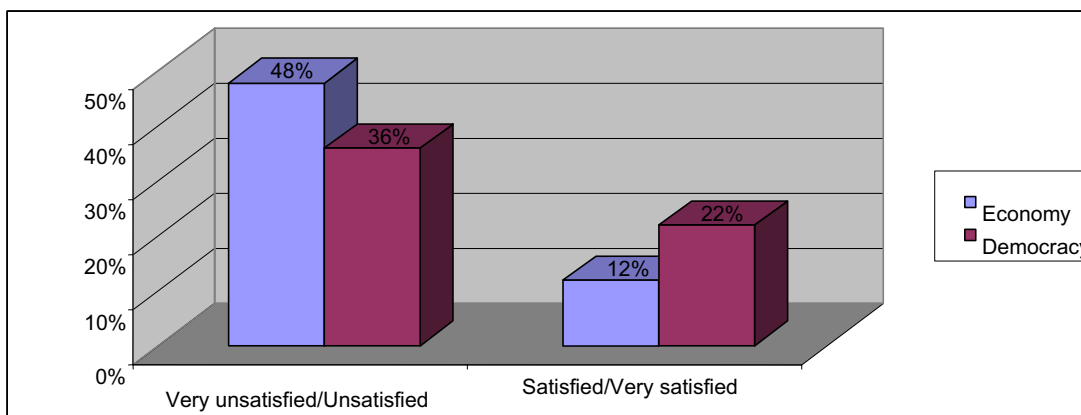
Are We Going in the Good Direction? People Rather Believe that We Are Not

Beyond the often fierce conflicts among the political actors, there has been a large consensus in what regards the *direction and the general strategy* of transition. They have shared therefore the common ideology of transition. In contrast, the population was characterized by an ambiguous attitude regarding the direction of transition: on the one hand, a large acceptance of it; on the other hand, a certain unuttered doubt, ideologically unstructured, as to the manner transition is accomplished.



Graph 2.1. The dynamics of the population's estimation of the direction that things are going to in our country. The rest up to 100% represents 'I do not know, I cannot say.' Comparable data are only from 1995. (*Barometer of public opinion*, October 2003; Metro-Media January/March 2004)

In most of the surveys of public opinion carried out starting from 1995 is included a question whose intention is to determine the popular perception of the global direction of changes in the period of transition: 'Do you believe that in our country things are going into a good or bad direction?' The constant surprise is that, excepting one year (1997), when the population was predominantly confident in the strategy of the new government, guaranteed by the promises of the Occident, the population estimates that the *direction is rather wrong*.



Graph 2.2. The degree of satisfaction regarding the state of the economy and of the new democracy. (*Barometer of public opinion*, October 2003) The rest up to 100% represents 'Nor satisfied, nor unsatisfied'; a few percents of non-answers.

There is an accentuated level of lack of satisfaction as to the results of the main two objectives of transition: a new democratic system and market economy. In the case of the performances of economy, the discontent is much more accentuated.

Economic Reform: Between Expectations and Results

The Downfall of Economy

It was to be expected that the restructuring of economy would be associated with a certain regress. But it was thought that these would be relatively reduced as level, as well as duration. The architects of the strategy of transition did not expect a brutal and prolonged downfall of the economy. The evolution of economy placed itself, for more than 10 years of transition, into a shocking lag between the expectations contained in the programs of change and the actual results.

After 14 years, the Romanian economy has not yet reached the quantitative level of the economy of 1989, year which in itself represented a regress compared to the anterior ones. It is only in 2005 that the economy is foretold to surpass the level of 1980. Only in 1996, Poland became the first country to have reached the level before the transition. Some countries, especially those of the former Soviet Union, are in far worse situation.

	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004*
GDP as % from 1989	94.4	82.2	7.0	76.1	79.1	84.8	88.1	82.8	78.8	77.9	79.6	84.1	88.3	92.6	97.7
GDP as % from the past year	-5.6	-12.9	-8.8	1.5	3.9	7.1	3.9	-6.1	-4.8	-1.2	2.1	5.7	5.0	4.9	5.5

Table 2.1. The dynamics of GDP in the countries in transition. Source: The National Institute of Statistics (NIS, INS in Romanian).

* On 2004 - projection

N. Belli arguments that the destructive effects of transition over economy have been more severe than those of war (2001).

Transition was characterized in its restructuring of industry rather by *deindustrialization*. In 1999, 40.8% of the industrial production of 1989 had been reached.

	Year with the lowest GDP	Year with GDP at the level of 1989	2002
Czech Republic	1992 – 86.9	2000 – 100.1	106.0
Hungary	1993 – 81.9	2000 – 104.2	111.7
Poland	1991 – 82.2	1996 – 104.5	129.5
Slovakia	1993 – 75.0	1999 – 100.4	110.2
Slovenia	1992 – 82.0	1997 – 100.1	121.2
Estonia	1994 – 62.0	-	91.1

Latvia	1993 – 51.1	-	76.1
Lithuania	1994 – 53.3	-	72.8
Bulgaria	1997 – 65.7	-	80.0
Romania	1992 – 75.0	Probable : 2005	85.1
Serbia and Montenegro	1993 – 40.6	-	50.5
Moldavia	1999 – 33.0	-	38.4
Ukraine	1999 – 38.5	-	46.5
Russia	1998 – 51.5	-	64.3
Belarus	1995 – 62.7	-	92.8

Table 2.2 The dynamics of GDP in the European countries in transition.
Source: MONEE, UNICEF, Florence

	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003
Industrial production	76.3	58.9	46.0	46.5	48.0	52.8	57.4	53.2	44.2	40.8	44.5	48.2	51.1	52.4
Salaried people in the industry	3.8	3.6	3.2	3.0	2.9	2.6	2.6	2.4	2.3	2.0	1.9	1.9	1.9	1.8

Table 2.3. The dynamics of industrial production as percent from 1989 and the number of salaried people in the industry, in million. Source: NIS

The Structural Failures of Economic Reform

The strategy of transition in economy requires the replacement of the *command economy with a market economy whose essential condition for an efficient functioning is the privatization of industrial units that are state property*. Changes have been programmed to take place in two distinct sequences. The first sequence was to have as an objective the introduction of market relations to replace the mechanisms of planning and directing, carried out by the state. The industrial units still public property had to obtain the status of independent actors on the market. Up to privatization, these were supposed to be restructured, adapting to the new conditions of internal and external market economy. At the same time, the encouraging of the emergence of new private industrial units and businesses represented the priority objective. Especially the foreign investments were to make the difference. The second sequence, which could follow immediately after, focused on the privatization of industrial units.

After 14 years of transition, the perception of the population regarding the main actors of economy is strongly negative. The foreign investors have the lowest degree of trust from the population, probably being perceived as those who swindled the privatized industrial units or businesses. The private firms inspire also a low degree of trust. Probably the state industrial units/businesses have better position not because of the economic performances, but because they are somewhat more controlled in their attitude towards the employees.

	Much/Very much	Not at all/Very little/Little
State enterprises	40%	49%
Private companies	33%	55%
Foreign investors	27%	57%

Table 2.4. The degree of trust/lack of trust in the main institutions of economy. ‘*How much faith do you have in...?*’. The rest up to 100% cannot say or represent non-answers. Source: CURS, October 2003

The Crisis of State Economy

The maintenance of an important segment of economy in the property of the state was inevitable, for a certain period of time, in the process of transition. Not even a policy of extremely rapid privatization could lead to the sudden replacement of the entire state economy. This thing s could only happen in the former German Democratic Republic, due to its being taken over by Federal Germany. But even here, despite the massive support coming from Federal Germany, the economic crisis proved to be unexpectedly durable, and the fall of industry, a catastrophe. (World Bank, 2002) For the other states a re-structuring was vital, which would valorize as much as possible the inherited economic accumulations, and not destroy them.

The state industrial units, freed from the distorting intervention of an arbitrary and bureaucratic political leadership, were expected to become more efficient than during the socialist time, even if only *privatization* was presaged to generate a substantially higher level of performance. In the command communist system, some of the industrial units functioned relatively well. In the new conditions, they were expected to function much more efficiently. Moreover, in the Western market economies there have always been state property industrial units that have functioned reasonably well. It is only in the '80s that a coherent program of privatization of the public sector was initiated there, which still continues to this day.

Reality was completely contraire to all expectations. The area of state economy functioned after the liberalization substantially more inefficient than in the politically and bureaucratically directed communist system, manifesting a chronic incapacity of re-structuring. The state industrial units crashed, their great majority reaching bankruptcy rapidly. The debts to the state and the other suppliers exploded. Many such units have survived through the increased dependence on the budgetary support.

The phenomenon was most visible in the monopoly areas that, in spite of the massive support, proved to be incapable of re-structuring. The strategy of state monopolies was characterized by a combination of imposing high prices, low quality and exploitation of financial resources of the state through bad administration. Their inefficient functioning became an important source of impoverishment of the population and the national budget.

Paradoxically, granting autonomy to the state industrial units and promoting the rules of market economy were measures incapable of securing an effective management, at least at the level of the one in the communist command economy.

Until privatization, the great majority of state industrial units were subjected to a process of robbery. A system of private ‘tick’ enterprises took shape around them, which

developed contractual relations with the units in question, to their systematic damage. The managers of state industrial units had an important part in the constitution of the system of robbery mentioned above. Even the few investments that the state industrial units benefited from were poorly administered or even misappropriated in the interest of different groups. But invoking the factor of 'corruption' is a superficial explanation away. The problem does not reside in a moral metaphysical decay of the managers, but in a system that does not ensure an efficient and responsible management, together with a serious deficit of control from the state, in its quality of owner. The naïve adoption of some structures of control from the private economy in the administration of state industrial units – administration boards, the Fund of State Property (FSP) and the Funds of Private Property (FPP) – proved to lead to a disastrous functioning. Control represents the key element of the efficient functioning of any system. An enterprise functions efficiently when it is controlled by the owner, even if that one is the state. The dismembering of the system of control without its replacement with sufficiently effectual mechanisms represents the ultimate explanation for the downfall of state economy. The control exerted by the state was more likely marginal and symbolic, leaving the entire responsibility to the managers, who had no economic interest in ensuring an efficient functioning of the units.

Caught in the tongs of political responsibility for the economy and the abandonment of its iron fist control, in the name of naïve liberalism (one cannot have liberal politics in an economy dominated by state property enterprises), the only real function of the state was that to economically support bankrupting industrial units. The incapacity of the state to act as a responsible owner made it to become the victim of its own endeavors. A vicious circle was created. The withdrawal of the state from the function of administration of its industrial units rendered it vulnerable to the combined pressures of their management and their unions to sustain through financing/borrowings, seldom returned, a negligently administered production and seriously 'infected by ticks'. The state had to continuously pay from its budget the losses of its industrial units, to pay for the robberies to which they were subjected. It became the first victim of the generalized robbery within the economy. It is difficult to accept the thesis that the state enterprises could not have been managed better. A process of self-hardening was triggered: the managerial catastrophic strategy of the state enterprises led to a prolonged agony of the state sector of the economy, the only solution being the immediate privatization of the state enterprises, even if such an approach would have destroyed many of them. Such an approach would have been correct only if we accept the *inevitability* of the disastrous performances of the state sector. But such a theory is not to be endorsed. The state sector has functioned relatively well many decades in the effective Western economies. Even within an irrationally and politically lead economy, such as the communist one, the state industrial units managed to reach performances definitely superior to those during the period of transition.

The failure of the management policy of the state sector was caused greatly by an extremely influent doctrine during the first years of transition: *the withdrawal of the state from economy*. It was necessary for the state to rethink its intervention in economy. Ever since 1990, the function of planning of the state was brutally eliminated, the argument being a rather concrete one: such a function contravened to the regulation mechanisms of market economy. Nevertheless, elements of planning existed in most of the capitalist economies. In France, even a few years ago, there was an important function of planning

the economy. The question remains open as to whether the abandonment of the state intervention, with paranoid accents, in an economy whose property it did hold is the actual source of its crisis.

And finally, one can invoke the under-protection of national economy in the relations with the international market. An economy in a process of restructuring must benefit from a minimum of protection, in order to have chances for start off.

Another cause was in the orientation of public investments. As the procedure frequently is during the periods of re-deployment of production, the investments in infrastructure were ignored, which could have taken over a part of the under-utilized personnel in the existing enterprises and would have answered some real, dire needs of the country. The pressure for supporting a stock production and some investments lacking strategy and used for personal benefits would have been thus greatly diminished.

There was a certain awkward resignation in what concerns the failures of the state industrial units. The only solution appeared to be privatization, the measure for correcting the inefficiencies of the state owned enterprises being a secondary preoccupation.

The Low Efficiency of Privatization: Re-launch versus the Destruction of Privatized Enterprises

In the ideology of the strategy of transition, privatization was considered to represent *a means* of re-structuring and re-launching of the economy. It was expected that privatization, aside from massive injection of new investments, would produce also an infusion of managerial models and principles much more efficient than the ones of the state. Subsidiary, it was expected that privatization should accomplish the role of “sanitation agent”, i.e. cleaning the chronically inefficient areas of economy. If it was because of the social pressures that the state had a limited capacity in cleaning the sickness-afflicted areas of economy, then the new private owners would be significantly freer to do it.

Therefore privatization was expected to produce a severe re-structuring: all the components that lacked perspective to be liquidated and the viable ones developed. A period of economic stress was expected to follow, with the diminution of production in certain areas, but the re-launch of the private enterprises was to compensate mostly for the costs of re-structuring. In this view, privatization was a means of economic growth, but with one condition: the cost of the taking over of the enterprises did not matter as much as the solid plan of re-structuring and re-launching, based on the infusion of capital and efficient management. In this context, the slogan ‘Privatization for a dollar is better than non-privatization’ was put forth. Of course, some industrial units presented good premises of development. It was natural for them to be sold for the best price possible, which was to be used by the state for solving the multitude of problems it was confronting.

What actually happened to privatization? Contrary to super-optimistic, the efficiency of privatization proved to be shockingly low. The greatest losses came from four distinct sources:

- a) The first private segment of economy was the sphere of intermediation. During the first period, the majority of the first successful private enterprises constituted

itself around the state enterprises, by intermediating their buying and selling. The new enterprises, many of them being the result of the privatization of state enterprises, have begun to control the commercial relations of the producing state enterprises, suppressing them: procuring raw materials, acquisition of technology and access to outlets. The combination private-public proved to be disastrous. The private enterprises started off by parasitizing (the current term of 'tick-enterprises' is very suggestive) the state enterprises. They have disorganized their management through corruption, gradually pushing them towards bankruptcy, by taking possession of their resources. Contrary to the initial project that meant for the state enterprises to be first re-structured and only after privatized, many of them were privatized only after they were emptied of resources and disorganized. Paradoxically, the first wave of privatization took advantage of the high vulnerability of the state sector, thus inducing a huge crisis.

- b) It was expected that most privatized enterprises be re-structured, entering an ascending trajectory. And it did happen in some cases. But the shock was that, also, many privatized enterprises were destroyed not because they did not have any more chances for re-launch, but simply because for the new owners, their destruction proved to be more profitable.

Paradoxically, the state proved to be an even weaker and more corrupt administrator in the process of privatization than in the one of administering the enterprises. And Western expertise, often used, proved to be modestly efficient in the act of privatization, as if suggesting that it were dominated by the strategy 'a rapid privatization is better, regardless of the result, instead a tardive one'. The high costs of the expertise for the privatization added to the losses of the process itself. The selection of the investors and the elaboration of the contracts of privatization proved to be poorly efficient.

Privatization acted more often as an impulse of downward movement instead of an upward one, being accompanied by an array of scandals. Some industrial units were bought not to be developed, but to bring immediate profits, through their dismembering and valorization of assets – estates, buildings. Many of the investments promised in the contract of privatization were never made actual. There are no clear statistics in this sense, but, intuitively, it can be estimated that the proportion of investors with resources of investment and intentions of development was plainly inferior to the expectations, the speculative investors being the dominating ones.

The matter must to be approached politically or sentimentally. This expectation proved to be naïve, because it had nothing to do with the very mechanisms of market economy. The destructive privatization was not due to an aberrant or even criminal conduct, but to the normal operation of the mechanisms of the market, which the strategy of privatization did not take into account. The economic actors have acted rationally according to the mechanisms of market economy, orienting towards the maximization of the profit in the manner most adequate in the context of our economy: more frequently by dismembering the industrial units than by developing them. The measures of protection of the process of privatization stipulated in the conditionality regarding the making of investments have functioned moreover at a low level, not able to avoid destructive privatizations.

- It is difficult to judge the role of privatization, but it is obvious that it amounted to more processes with negative effects: the tardiness of privatization, as well as rushed 'bulky' privatization, without ensuring the necessary conditions for economic re-launch. The only merit of privatization was the liquidation of some enterprises lacking any chance of revival and the disciplining of the work force, both of which were more difficult to realize by the state itself.
- c) The privatization of state monopolies, especially those involved in providing public services, represents a particularly complex problem. The Western countries have approached it with great prudence, also. The turning of the state monopoly into a private one does not necessarily lead to efficacy. It can lead to increased quality of internal management, but the lack of competition makes the key stimulating factor of market economy not be present. Private monopoly engenders a captivity of the consumer. Instead of the state, the consumer pays for the precarious management and wild profit. The monopoly position has made much more profitable the minimization of investments and the ensuring of high profits by exploiting the consumer, imposing high prices, complementary with low quality services. And this thing really happened. Romtelecom³ is just one of the cases of privatization with huge losses, especially for the population. In the area of public services there is the risk that, after making huge profits with few investments, the new owners will abandon the already drained industrial units, the state being forced to undertake the support for these socially vital areas or the new owner to raise even more the prices in order to realize the severely neglected investments. The privatization of the monopoly area has systematically 'reversed' the order of things: privatization before creating the mechanisms of competition or the instruments of control in the monopoly area.
 - d) Faulty planning of the sequences of privatization: on the one hand, excessive delay of privatization in certain areas, where it could have been easily and efficiently realized, as in, for instance, tourism. These areas fell prey too robbery not through privatization, as some politicians feared, but through the intermediary forms of mandatory-ness that proved to be a legal form of counterproductive exploitation of public resources, ruling out the chance of attracting investments. Complementary, an excessive haste to privatize by all costs. Many contracts were signed with owners who did not presents the necessary guarantees, being made moreover to fit the 'bulky norm' of privatization or merely to deplete the state of its industrial units.

The estimation that privatization was tardily made, losing the *momentum* of an efficacious re-launch, is dominant. It is likely that there were factors (parochial interests or merely excessive prudence) that delayed the privatization of some industrial units. It is also probable that there was – actually an inevitable fact – corruption in the process of negotiation, which generated selling under the real price. But this was not the most important cause of the downfall of economy and the huge losses. A crucial factor is systematically ignored: the rhythm of privatization does not depend only on the political will, but also on the demand for buying/taking over of enterprises. The fall of the socialist system lead to an explosion of the offer of privatization, in the conditions of a limited

³ Romanian Telecommunication Company

demand. Internally there was not enough capital to take over the big industrial units. There was need of gradual accumulation of capital. The external capital was also limited. The geopolitical position towards the Occident was, inevitably, an important factor of reduced availabilities for investment.

There is also another perspective: the downfall of the public property economic area entailed a strong pressure for rapid privatization. If initially privatization was considered to be necessary as to providing a healthy environment for the functioning of market economy, as well as to producing an *increased* efficiency of the former state industrial units, it time, it became obvious that in most cases its function was to deliver the state of the burden of progressively inefficient units or to save the units in question from bankruptcy.

The Loss of the Wages with Agriculture

In 1990, the political actors 'laid wages' on the re-launch of the agriculture.

Many expected agriculture to represent a source of stability for the economy in a period of crisis of the industry; this happened only at a low level: stricken by the downfall of industry, the collectivity was rescued by an agriculture of survival.

The changes in agriculture have stood under the sign of some options that proved to be disastrous. The reform of agriculture, based on the destruction of co-operative farms and the *restitution/reinstitution of the property right*, represented rather a *primitive* reform, incapable to re-launch agriculture, impelling it into a profound crisis. At the same time, the redistribution of estates to their exact initial tract led to an enormous fragmentation of property. In addition, it was known from the beginning that the system will create excessive juridical confusions, ruining law suits stretching on long periods of time, tensions and conflicts. Contrary to naïve expectations, the selected solution generated a much more accentuated corruption than if another strategy of reinstituting of private property in agriculture were to be adopted.

The reinstitution of proprietorship, in the terms of an almost total lack of capital, joined with the lack of a clear policy of financial support for the capitalization of the new farms that had some chances of development, delayed the re-launch of agriculture.

A paranoid policy set against any form of co-operativity, based exclusively on political-ideological reasons, and not on pragmatism, deepened the crisis of agriculture.

The lack of protection of the inherited collective agricultural systems was another destructive factor. The most relevant example was the one of the irrigation system, which was abandoned, left pray to utter robbery.

The great state farming units, which maintained for a period of time the agricultural production, lacking a strategy of change, decayed, becoming the object of a robbery similar to the one in the industry.

The clearest result of the agrarian policy was producing an agriculture with fragmented property, severely de-capitalized. Many farms functioned at the level of subsistence farming, whose only contribution was in compensating the severe poverty of the population. Many persons who lost their place of work found a source of survival in a primitive agriculture, incapable to become a source of self-capitalization. But such an agriculture, deprived of any chances for development, represented a factor that maintained poverty.

The Financial Strategy: a Financial Balance Paid for with the Maintenance of Underdevelopment

From the beginning, the financial policy became dependent on the strategy imposed by the IMF. The objective, a just and healthy one in itself, i.e. the promotion of financial balance, but disjoined from a global strategy of economic re-launch, generated a defensive mechanism, which, although it has the merit of avoiding serious unbalancing, became in itself a source of maintaining underdevelopment. It is true that, in the circumstances of economic confusion and high risk of using borrowings in a poorly productive of even wastefully manner, such a prudent approach had its justification. But it became also a source of inaction. The financial policy was adamant in closing the faucet of investments in the areas of infrastructure or in those that could have stimulated a definite economic growth. It may be said that the restrictive financial policy was based on the assumption of the inevitability of the poor functioning of the economy and of the inefficient/corrupt utilization of the obtained funds. Contrary to this conservatory approach, during the periods of crisis, contracting new borrowings for the re-launch of the economy is a habitual practice.

The conservatory strategy of the IMF was responsible also for the degradation of the social capabilities of the country. In the conditions of severe economic crisis, a supplementary social support is necessary to maintain the social capabilities of the collectivity (Zamfir, Pop, Zamfir, 1994; Zamfir, 1999). The policy of maintaining the public social costs down to the lowest level in Europe bears an important responsibility for the recrudescence of poverty and the degradation of human capabilities.

In the other countries in transition, the level of borrowings was substantially higher than in Romania, a part of those being used for a more accentuated social protection. Let us notice that countries with substantially higher annual deficits than Romania were, unlike our country, the inheritors of quite large international debts – the case of Poland and Hungary.

Hungary	-5.4
Slovakia	-4.3
Bulgaria	-3.7
Poland	-3.6
Romania	-3.3
Czech Republic	-2.4

Table 2.5. The medium annual budgetary deficit, between 1990-2002. Source: MONEE, UNICEF, Florence

In its 2004 rapport, IMF acknowledges, for the first time, the responsibility of some important errors in the policy imposed o Romania, during the last 14 years. One of the most serious acknowledged errors refers to the labeling of Romania as an insolvable country, which made it impossible for it to attract private creditors. Probably the attitude towards the maintaining, on an extremely long period of time, of the high level of inflation is an indicator of the social attitude of the leaders of the country, with the tacit

complicity of the IMF. If in what regards the borrowings and the level of public expenditures, especially the ones of public social ones, the IMF exerted an extremely strict control, in spite of all the public statements, the IMF was rather tolerant regarding inflation. Inflation is the second instrument in maintaining financial balance, transferring the economic problems on the shoulders of the population. Maintaining inflation, which forwards the costs of economic losses to the population instead of making them transparent through the specifically economic mechanisms, was an important source of impoverishment.

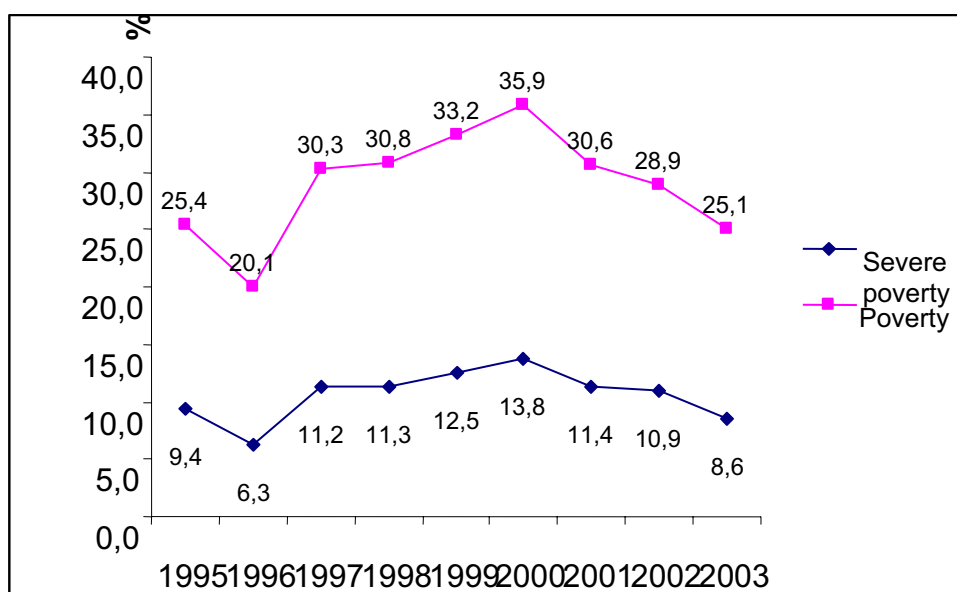
The Standard of Life: The Explosion of Impoverishment on the Background of the Rapid Growth of Inequalities

The communist regime was characterized by a policy of reducing economic inequalities. Beyond the inequalities maintained between tight limits though formal regulations (for instance, the highest salary could not surpass the proportion of 5.6 to 1, having as reference the minimum wages), for the political and administrative elites, there were informal supplementary sources for incomes, especially under the form of free or reduced products. In Romania, the control of inequality was much more efficient at the time, not through the strict regulation of formal income, but mostly through the control of luxury goods: households, cars, vacations abroad.

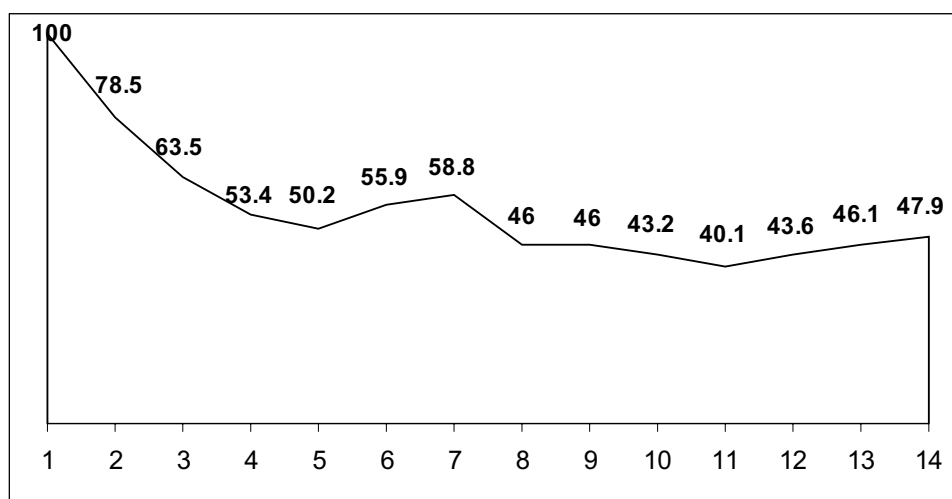
One of the main claims of the Revolution was a more accentuated differentiation of the incomes as against performances. And, indeed, the differentiation of incomes boomed, but in a poor relation to performances. At least that is the perception of the population. Great fortunes were rapidly accumulated through speculations that are suspected to be not necessarily illegal (in the context of a confuse legislation, many actions were allowed, by not being banned), but against the morale of a healthy market economy, not talking into account the public morale. The inequality of incomes deepened substantially: from a Gini coefficient of 0.24 in 1989 to a 0.35 in 2001.

Country	1989	2001
Romania	0.24	0.35
Bulgaria	0.23	0.33
Estonia	0.28	0.38
Croatia	0.36	0.35 (1998)
Lithuania	0.26	0.35
Poland	0.27	0.34
Latvia	0.26	0.33 (2000)
Slovenia	0.26 (1991)	0.25 (2000)
Hungary	0.22	0.27
Czech Republic	0.20	0.24
Ukraine	0.23	0.36
Russia	0.26	0.42
Moldavia	0.25	0.43

Table 2.6. The dynamics of the Gini coefficient. Source: MONEE, 2003



Graph 2.3 The dynamics of poverty and severe poverty – the total of the population.
Source: The CASPIS rapport on the state of poverty, 2004



Graph 2.4. The aggregated indicator of the most important formal incomes per person (AII), in prices of 1900. Source: C. Zamfir, 2001.

Note: AII presents the followings incomes, per person, in 1990 prices: salary incomes and social incomes (pensions, welfare for children, for unemployment, social welfare). These represented, between 1005 and 2001, a little over 60% of the incomes. The other incomes up to 100%, which we could not take into consideration out of lack of comparative data, are: the income from agricultural production for one's own consumption (about 30% of the total of incomes, between 1995 and 2001), to which we add the incomes from the selling of agricultural products, nonagricultural activities on one's own account, incomes from properties, dividends, interest rates, rentals, profit, which, together, represented not more than 11%, in 1995). The indicator of

aggregated formal incomes presents a slightly more accentuated drop than the total incomes: the incomes not taken into consideration presented a slight growth tendency, but their relatively reduced weight does not substantially modify the big picture.

Due to the difficulty of detecting incomes, especially in the case of the new categories of wealth, the inequality of the distribution of incomes is more accentuated than the registered one. Even if we take into consideration only the measures inequality, the countries in transition, especially the ones from the former Soviet Union, present a much higher level of inequality than the one of the Western states, some of them nearing the situation of the countries from Latin America. The irony is the Russia, the author of the communist revolution, oriented towards the elimination of excessive inequalities, has reached, after just a few years of transition, levels of inequality considered to be excessive even by the most liberal capitalist countries, with an extremely high Gini coefficient, of 0.42 in 2001.

Some estimations indicate a level of poverty that is around 7% in 1989 (Zamfir, 2001). The first wave of impoverishment from 1991-1993 placed poverty at a level of over 25%, and the second wave of 1997-2000 reached, in the last year, a level of 36%.

The process of impoverishment can be approximated if we take into consideration the dynamics of the main sources of income. We have created the *Aggregated indicator of the most important formal incomes* (AII). During the first years of transition we have a dramatic drop of aggregated incomes. The salary, the main income for the majority of the population, was eroded, reaching, in 1998, two thirds of its real value in 1989. But at the same time, as a result of the downfall of the economy, the number of salaried workplaces was reduced to almost more than a half in 2000 compared to 1990.

	Year – the lowest wages	Year – at the level of 1989	2001
Czech Republic	1991 – 71.7	1996 – 104.6	118.5
Hungary	1995 – 74.3	-	90.6
Poland	1993 – 71.2	1999 -109.3	114.3
Slovakia	1991 – 67.2	-	82.0
Slovenia	1992 – 60.1	-	89.5
Estonia	1992 – 45.2	-	74.7
Latvia	1992 – 49.0	-	71.1
Lithuania	1993 – 28.4	-	44.5
Bulgaria	1996 – 41.7	-	50.3
Romania	1998 – 67.4	-	77.1
FRY Macedonia	1992 – 41.6	-	51.1
Moldavia	1994 – 50.0	-	64.6
Russia	2000 – 44.0	-	52.7
Ukraine	1999 – 48.4	-	59.1

Table 2.7. The dynamics of the real wages (as percent of 1989). Source: MONEE, 2003

	1989	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003
The number	8.0	8.2	7.6	7.9	6.7	6.4	6.2	5.9	5.6	5.4	4.8	4.6	4.6	4.6	4.6

of salaried people in million															
As % 1989	100.0	102.0	94.7	86.1	83.4	80.5	77.0	74.3	70.0	67.1	59.5	57.8	57.8	57.1	57.4

Table 2.8. The dynamics of the number of salaried people, in million and as % of 1989.
Source: NIS

Social Disaggregation

Transition was paid for not only by the downfall of the economy and the impoverishment of the population, but through serious processes of social disaggregation, most of them being impossible to quantify: the degradation of workforce, disaggregation of families, abandonment of children, growth of delinquency, especially of organized crime, drugs, low security of the citizen, growth of violence; new forms such as blackmail, kidnapping, protection taxes, traffic of human beings, sexual and economic exploitation, up to traffic of children, growth of the phenomenon of abandoned homeless children, growth of the difficulty of social integration of youngsters from poor environments, especially those that come from the institutions of social care, degradation of school participation and professional stock of the active population.

To social degradation we add the one of health. The spectacular recrudescence of diseases that are difficult to imagine in a modern society, such as tuberculosis and STDs, but also HIV/AIDS, is alarming.

Although the downfall of economy can be corrected in a relatively short period of time, the social disaggregative processes are much more difficult to absorb, with high costs spread out over an period of time that is impossible to determine. Many of these disaggregative processes will disappear only at the same time with the nowadays generations. I will indicate only some of the most important disaggregative social processes (Zamfir, Preda, Dan, 2004): growth of extreme poverty that generates human degradation very difficult to reverse: fundamental nutritional deficiencies, misery associated with the conditions of living or even the total lack of a decent household, exclusion from the sphere of economic activity.

Chapter 3

The Results of Transition: The Political System and the Public Institutions

The Moral Crisis of the Political System

After the Revolution of 1989, the first shock came not from the sphere of economy, but from the one of politics.

The Revolution was characterized by a tremendous feeling of emotional liberation. The fundamental expectation of the collectivity was that, instead of the oppressive and arbitrary communist regime, an actual democratic political regime be installed, invested with the huge responsibility of projecting the reconstruction of the Romanian society.

The identification of a new political system and its construction did not seem to be an easy goal to achieve. Nevertheless, much more than any pessimistic expectation would have foreseen it, even in the next days after the Revolution, the collectivity received powerful shocks from the political sphere. This became a major source of demoralization and alienation. The lag between the expectations of the Revolution and reality itself generated a real quake in the collective consciousness. In time, the political system appeared to the collectivity to be a major factor to be held responsible more for the failures of transition than for its successes.

The perturbations induced by the political process explain for the most part the anomalies of transition, in itself being the main anomaly of the latter.

The reform of the political system, just as in case of economy, can be characterized by a mixture of successes and failures. One cannot ignore the fact that in a short period of time, the most important components of the political reform were accomplished: the introduction of a representative democracy, composed of many political parties, with all its institutions, the parliament, the political parties; changes in the entire public administration, central and local. But to this we must add the profound distortions in the normal functioning of the system: violent political disputes, leading up to confrontations far astray from the spirit of democracy, street pressures for taking over power, the phenomenon of ‘mineriads’⁴ etc.; the developing of some ‘awkward’ relations, as to the principles of democracy, between the Romanian state, on the one hand, and the international organisms and Western governments, on the other hand; a press that induces frustration and stress, as the result of the combination of objectivity, critical demeanor and confuse criticism.

The data produced by the estimations of opinion indicates consistently the fact that the trust of the collectivity in the fundamental political institutions is accentuated negative.

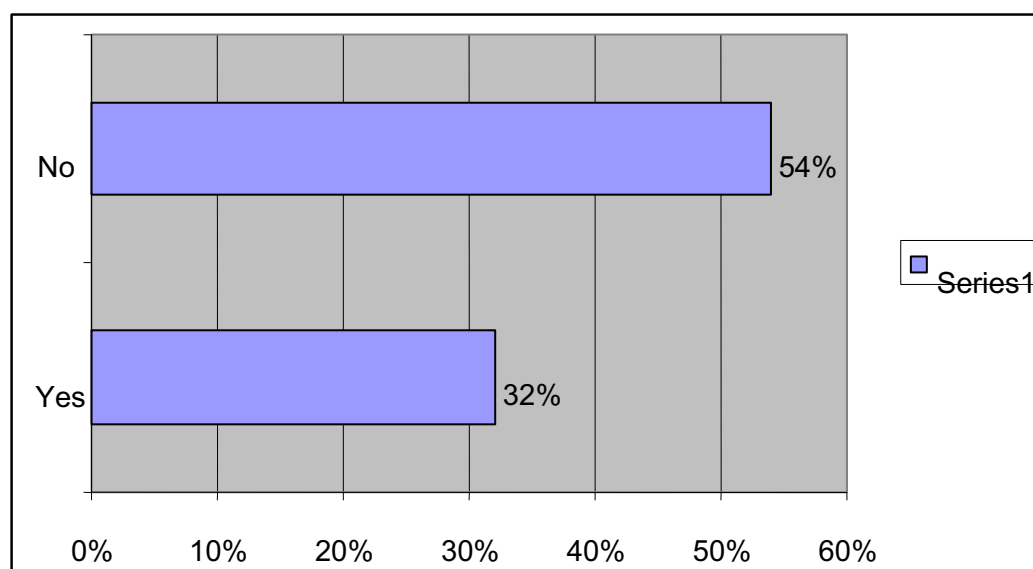
	Not at all/Very little/Little	Much/Very much
Political parties	83	8
Parliament	81	14
Justice	73	21

⁴ The bloody marches of the miners from Jiu Valley, in 1990 and 1991.

Government	72	23
Labor unions	63	17
Banks	62	21
Police	61	35
President	60	37
NGOs	54	18
Mayoralty	54	42
Education	40	51
Mass-media	37	55
Army	32	63

Table 3.1. *‘How much faith do you have in...?’*. The Barometer of public opinion, October 2003. Percents.

The majority of the population does not feel represented by any political party.



Graph 3.1. *‘Do you believe that nowadays, in Romania, there is at least one political party that represents/defends your interests?’*. The Barometer of public opinion, October 2003.

The degree of trust is low not only in the public institutions – political parties, parliament, government, law – , but also in trade unions, banks and even mass media.

If the administration of 1999-2000 lead to a catastrophic drop of trust in all the public institutions, the government installed at the end of 2000 produced a certain rehabilitation of trust in most of them (presidency, government, parliament), but without entailing spectacular changes.

	1996	2000	2000/1996 increase/decrease as % from the	2003	2003/2000 increase/decrease as % from the
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			initial level		initial level
President	60%	19%	- 68%	37%	+ 95%
Parliament	23%	9%	- 61%	14%	+ 55%
Banks	25%	12%	- 52%	21%	+ 75%
Government	26%	13%	- 50%	23	+ 77%
Justice	38%	20%	- 47%	21%	+ 5%
Labor unions	28%	19%	- 32%	17%	- 10%
Mayoralties	62%	44%	- 31%	42%	- 4%
Political parties	10% (1998)	8%	- 20%	8%	0
Army	76%	67%	- 12%	63%	- 6%
Police	48%	43%	- 10%	35%	- 19%
Church	83%	86%	+ 4%	85%	- 1%
Mass-media	-	62% (June 2002)	-	55%	- 21%

Table 3.2. The dynamics of trust in the institutions of the public system. The Church is also included as witnessing institution. Only the percents of ‘faith’ are included. Calculated on The Barometer of public opinion, October 2003.

Did the New Democracy Commence with the Wrong Leg Foremost?

The emotional state of the first days after the Revolution was characterized by political enthusiasm, followed immediately by a growing collective anxiety produced by a series of frustrating processes that induced a feeling of impotency. We must altogether keep into account that during that period all the judgments had a strong moral connotation. A few very important events created a negative background, amplified by the subsequent processes.

- *Who fired at us?* The Romanian Revolution was the only bloody downfall of the communist regime. The collectivity expected a much more violent repression. The hundreds of dead and wounded were not a surprise, being regarded as a tragic and heroic price for taking down the communist regime. The Securitate, militia, but also the army, beyond their rules, were expected to take part in the repression due to the political orders they would have received. Many of those of who fired at the population were perceived by the collectivity as being also victims of Ceaușescu’s regime, forced to participate in the repression. But beyond this human ‘understanding’, firstly, the need for establishing some *institutional responsibilities* for the repression was felt; secondly, for some individual responsibilities: those who gave the orders, at different levels, which persons proved to have had initiatives that went beyond the received orders. The collectivity did not expect spectacular penalties, rather the identification of the responsible ones and a fair, yet forgiving trial. But the problem responsibilities

was buried in a heap of confuse judicial inquiries, on the background of the tacit refusal of the governments to draw a political analysis of the institutions of the communist regime. The obsession to absolve the army of any responsibility was demoralizing.

- *The phenomenon of the terrorists.* The emergence, after Ceaușescu's flee, of what appeared to be a war triggered by forced supposed to be loyal to him was shocking, but somewhat not totally unexpected. However, the fact the new government nor the following ones were capable of identifying and punishing a 'terrorist' was extremely frustrating, and especially that they were not even capable to clarify the nature of the forces that produced this phenomenon. In a country like Romania, where everything is known about anything always, the lack of at least a plausible theory on this bloody phenomenon is to create suspicions. Ultimately, the explanation offered by a few important political actors – there was no terrorist, rather by error/confusion/mayhem the army fired upon one another – appears to be not only lacking any credibility, but even insulting for the collectivity. For me, the manner in which the phenomenon of terrorism was dealt with represented the *original sin* of the Revolution.
- *The trial of the Ceaușescu spouses,* even in the shocking context of terrorism, produced a great disappointment for the greater mass of the collectivity. If the Ceaușescu spouses had deserved, probably, to be executed, the Revolution did not deserve such an act. The collectivity expected that this trial, considered to be inevitable and necessary, to subject to public discussion all the horrors of communism, climaxing with a penalty that many did not concur with its being a capital one. Beyond invoking the hazy events of those days, there is a responsibility. The new government refrained from identifying the responsible ones for such a decision. Regardless if we can now judge in a manner or other such a decision, the identification of responsibilities was normal. The two phenomena – the terrorism and the Ceaușescu trial – provoked a sense of bitterness not so much because of their content proper, but because of the behavior of the new government in their choice not to present the expected transparency and to assume responsibility.
- *The first attempt to steal the Revolution: the threat of the 'faceless' forces.* The street protest of the population against Ceaușescu coagulated the consensus and the solidarity, generating profound collective feelings of pride and enthusiasm. The high consensus of the Revolution was rapidly replaced with violent conflicts between street groups devoid of clear political bodies, which professed accusations difficult to understand for the greater mass of the collectivity. The most serious was the street violence of January 1990, from Bucharest. The place of the population, being out on the street out of a unanimously accepted anti- Ceaușescu attitude, was taken, after just a few days, by a 'faceless' force, devoid of any transparent program and who awakened the fear that the new fragile government would be disorganized in order for groups with no precise contour to assume power. The manifestations of those moments, characterized

moreover by destructive and confuse incitation, were to generate collective states of panic. They did not express, not even by far, consensual objectives, but hidden intentions. The collectivity assisted in front of the TV, with no possibility of intervention, to the attempt of some unidentifiable forces to seize the newly conquered liberty and who threatened to 'steal' the Revolution, which was not yet consolidated in democratic forms. Under these conditions, inevitably, there appeared a large social consensus around the only highly visible personality, Ion Iliescu, perceived as a defender against unknown assaults.

The calling for the miners at the end of January appeared to some, in the conditions where the structures of the new state were extremely fragile to the violent and antidemocratic assault, as a somewhat justified manner of protecting the new democracy. The negative effects of calling for the miners proved to be enormous later on.

As in the case of the first two events, the nature of these movements remained unclear and no responsibility was identified for them. In the disputes created around the calling for the miners there was an asymmetry difficult to explain: violent critiques of the government for calling of the miners, on the one hand; the lack of availability to clarify the nature and to identify the authors of the events that generated the calling of the miners, on the other hand.

- *The perverse effect of the reconstitution of historical parties.* The first parties to appear after the Revolution were the historical parties: the Democratic Christian-Peasant National Party (DCPNP, or PNȚCD in Romanian), the National Liberal Party and the Social-Democratic Party. In an unexpected manner, the reconstruction of these parties produced an actual moral shock to the collectivity. In contrast with the general expectation that the directions of development of the country would be clarified, through a rather vaguely understood, but profoundly moral democratic process, there appeared claims for power on the grounds of historical rights, imposed through political pressures. The source of this frustration must be looked for in the legitimacy of the claims of these parties. The historical parties offered as support for obtaining power a historical legitimacy, by invoking a distant past, completely irrelevant for the huge majority of the population. For this aim, the sufferings produced by a close past represented a much more sold legitimacy for the right to democratically participate in the projection of the future. The claim to hold a monopoly over the anticommunist program was tacitly equivalent with the elimination of any political participation of the collectivity. It is understandable then the collective shock produced by the attempts of the historical parties to obtain power through varied political pressures, including street actions. The re-installment of monarchy, one of the most important objectives of the historical parties, appeared to the population to be more of a *coup d'état* than a free option. The same with the claim of superior competence over the population estimated to be incompetent in the matters of 'true democracy' and 'true market economy'. Finally, the request of support from the Occident in order to gain access to power, treating as irrelevant the will of the population to decide for itself. The negative reaction of the greater mass of the population is paradigmatic when faced with the declaration of a future political

actor, returned to the country after many decades, made on the staircase of the plane and broadcasted on the national television: *I know* what capitalism and democracy mean and *I will teach you* too. Probably that, up to a certain measure, he was right, although it was not to be supposed that he effectively knew how to build such a complex system. Many similar gestures represented irritating invitations for the population to ‘stay at home’, for anyway it does not know what capitalism or democracy is. Such presuppositions were also fundamentally incorrect, violating the first principle of democracy: the active participation of the population to the construction of the new system does not necessarily presume a complete competence, but rather it represents the only opportunity to learn. The denial of the legitimacy of the first ‘experts’ coming from abroad, through the famous expression ‘you did not eat soybean salami’, does not appear to be so primitive in this context. It was a bitter reaction that proved, in the perspective of the following years, to be rather correct.

- *The first parliament (CPUN⁵)* gave a strong blow to the democratic aspirations of the population. The reason for the constituting of this forum, was, probably, firstly, the answer to the political pressures of some political groups that claimed power, accusing the provisory government of lacking democracy. The taking over by CPUN of the authority to take the fundamental decisions, an institution of the type in *Caragiale’s*⁶ plays, being the result not of a representation of some kind, but of the compromise between the political groups in their fight for power, was a strong source of alienation. In fact, CPUN represented moreover a negotiation of technocracy with the radical anticommunist political groups coming from the parties dissolved in the 40s and activated immediately after the Revolution, doubled by the amused toleration of some colorful personae, beyond the institution of a procedure of taking urgent decisions. The new government accepted, often giving off the impression that not out of conviction, but only out of a desire to prove its democratic open attitude, very debatable decisions taken by this forum with a media image verging on the grotesque. Frustrating was the fact that the most active in CPUN were a series of *accentuated personalities*, extremely vocative, often sub-cultural or even paranoid, the spectacle set up being really shocking for the population that participated only by watching TV. The new quasi-democratic organism of legislation offered legitimacy at the top of the power chain to some groups and persons that had no actual legitimacy before the collectivity. Its credibility with the mass of the population was extremely low, and its effect on the morale of the population was devastating.
- *Fundamental decisions taken ‘in the street’, hastened, forced by pressure groups.* One of the dangers of instating an effective democracy constituted the hastened imagination of some political adventurers who found, on the background of the

⁵ Provisional parliament until the elections; was composed of the representatives of different parties in the process of constitution, social groups, scientific and cultural personalities.

⁶ Ion Luca Caragiale (1852-1912), famous Romanian playwright. His plays are characterized by a classical construction and a very acute observation of the social realities of the time, always mixed with a fine sense of irony.

lack of the mechanisms for democratic decision, a space completely free of lawful frame without any public debate. A typical example is the abolition of the capital punishment. Such a measure taken in the street, sustained by the Council of Europe and with which there was, probably, a potential large agreement, appeared at the time to be completely inopportune, when other were the priorities. Moreover, it did not seem to be the proper moment to take such a decision in an extremely confuse period when many believed that the upholding of the capital punishment could offer a certain protection. Another decision forced in the street was also the ban of the Communist Party. Although the anticommunist sentiment was extremely popular, the ban by political decision of this party was received with reluctance. Firstly, it was a problem of principle of every democracy: in such a new frame, a party cannot be simply banned. Secondly, the political confrontation with a reconstituted communist party represented an excellent opportunity to subject communism to a real political trial, facilitating a dispute over the fundamental political principles and the subsequent responsibilities. The later political process proved that, paradoxically, the fact that the Communist Party did not survive represented a rather negative factor in the process of ideological clarification. In a certain measure, the haste to force, beyond the logic of democracy, the dissolution of this party was similar to the execution of the Ceaușescu family. Anyway, the decision was overridden, fact that did not change the fate of the Communist Party, which had naturally dissolved. The over 4 million members disappeared, not even the least significant minority succeeded in surviving from an organizational point of view. Such an act did not take place in any other former socialist country. The pressure to transform Romania into monarchy represented, also, a completely undemocratic – and against the attitude of the collectivity – attempt.

And the new government indulged in the temptation of adopting important law-frames, which were not urgent and that should have been adopted through the normal mechanisms of a new democracy. Fundamental decisions taken in haste, not through democratic mechanisms, but by unrepresentative political forces, to which an colored multitude of political adventurers entered in the organisms of government were added, shocked the diffuse democratic expectations, strengthening the *process of passive-rendering of the collectivity*.

- *The demonetization of political life through demagogical measures of stimulating the explosion of improvised parties.* The hope of realizing a responsible democracy was eroded through a series of opportunistic measures of the post-revolutionary leadership, based on an ostentatious political liberalism, which lead moreover to the construction of a ‘façade democracy’. A typical such case was the explosion of the number of parties: about 200 in the first months of 1990. The explosion of ‘paper parties’ was treated by the provisory government as a sign of its will to unconditionally sustain political freedom, whereas the collectivity perceived it more as a sign of opportunism and irresponsibility. The gesture in itself looked good, from an ideological point of view, for the Occident that was quite suspicious regarding the new power, but had a strong demoralizing effect on the collectivity. The parties appeared explosively were not the carriers of some

distinct and sufficiently credible ideological and political programs. Its majority was perceived to be more likely buffooneries, but more definitely unscrupulous businesses that made the TV viewer sick, especially since the new government took them seriously, with deference. All the persons who wanted to found a party received special facilities, money and estates that could have been economically exploited, without imposing a reasonable minimum of conditions.

The emergence of the multitude of political parties represented, most definitely, the first form of legal robbery of public resources, opening a negative exemplarity. The strategy of the government relied, correctly, on the fact that the large number of parties will be cleansed through the predictable political failure. But what not taken into consideration was that, alongside the economical cost paid by the collectivity for such a demonstrative gesture, the psychological cost of the feeling of disgusted chagrin towards the beginnings of the new democracy.

Eight Distortions of the Political Process

The political events described above have left their mark on the post-revolutionary political process, engendering numerous structural distortions. The general form of the political process cannot be accounted for through these events, being generated by the very strategy of transition.

1. *From the consensus around some clear objectives to confuse and violent polarization.* The collectivity was shocked by the rapid passing from a high level of consensus and solidarity during the first days of the Revolution to a violent explosion of political conflicts. It was to be expected that the political will, which had been initially constituted at a high consensual level of some abstract principles, would be followed by a differentiation of political options. It was thus presupposed that the transition opened by the Revolution would represent a combination of *fundamental consensus* – the replacement of the communist model with the capitalist Western one, the promotion of democracy as a means of achieving freedom, the integration in the Western world – and *differentiations* in what regards the strategies to achieve these objectives, not necessarily characterized by profound *conflicts*. The initial consensus, instead of gradually evolving towards a differentiation of programs, was rapidly and violently questioned, as principle. The political and ideological polarization, often extremely violent, was not based on different *political programs*, but was an expression of the fight for power that used *abstract ideological accusations*. The suspicion that important political forces intend to re-install communism ('the government «stole» the Revolution') under one form or the other (gorbachevism, neocommunism, crypto-communism, 'communist mentalities', 'belonging to the former Securitate') poisoned the political atmosphere. Even recently, in the discourse of an important political leader of the opposition (at the TV station, during the first months of 2004) reappeared the surprising accusation of 'bolshevism'. The very idea of consensus, even a partial one, was totally rejected as representing an unacceptable means of manipulation exerted by the neocommunist forces.

Of course, the persistence of some certain communist nostalgia/mentalities was inevitable, but the great majority of the population did not deem these to be strong enough in order to have themselves expressed in an important political movement. In addition, it was to be expected that they will rapidly diminish in the process of crystallization of a strategy of change.

2. *The substitution of criteria: from the democracy as participation and freedom to the democracy as an institution and imposing the 'correct' political options.* A displacement in the signification of the principle of democracy was produced, from *its very own content* – the will of the collectivity – to *institutions* such as 'truly democratic' political parties, monarchy etc., as the only guarantors of democracy, regardless of the opinion of the collectivity. Paradoxically, groups self-entitled as 'the true democrats' were at the same time the promoters of an ideology of political elitism: the population is not politically and ideologically mature, therefore not ready for freedom and for the 'true' democracy. The results of different elections were often contested or attributed to the lack of democratic maturity, 'stupidity', the need for a 'big daddy' or even to communist mentalities that the population can free itself of with difficulty.

Although there was a large consensus over the direction of change, segments of the political class have promoted, in typically dogmatic-authoritarian style, under the form of 'political correctness', recipes of change whose taking into discussion was strongly discouraged. A new censorship of thought was produced thus: any question mark could trigger a violent accusing reaction from a highly vocative segment, such as 'crypto-communist mentality'.

3. *From the aspiration to democracy to typically antidemocratic political behaviors.* No one expected the instauration of democracy to represent a non-problematical process. After the liberation from under the primitive authoritarian structures of the communist regime, the antidemocratic forms no longer had any chances to be accepted. Contrary to expectations, such antidemocratic manifestations did take place and have generated important political and moral shocks.

January 1990 recorded attempt to take over power by force, with street confrontations between the manifesters of different political forces.

The famous 'University Square'⁷ followed, extremely disputed not only politically, but also morally. For some, University Square represented the manifestation of some radical minority groups, indifferent to the point of view of the majority. After the elections of 1990, the continuation of 'University Square' questioned the very principle of accepting the results of democratic elections. A new cycle of violence, whose actors remained unknown, as in the case of the terrorists, accentuated the demoralization. The lack of intervention of the forces of order against the aggression on state institutions by 'faceless' groups remains just as unexplainable. A new 'miner-ade', with certainty politically induced, was the last act, and not the initiator of the cycle of violence from that period. The miners became the main actor to take the blame because of the lack of willpower of all

⁷ The central square of Bucharest, where for a few months at the beginning of the '90s, there was a continuous anti-government manifestation, as the latter was considered to be communist.

the political groups to identify the real initiators of violence. Nor was the responsibility of replacing the legitimate forces of order by calling the miners assumed, which created a precedent of political violence much more dangerous than University Square itself.

The attempt to bring back the king and re-install monarchy, in the conditions of a large anti-monarchism of the population, represented another tentative to obtain political power eluding the democratic vote, instead by instating an institution that would support a political segment against the other.

4. *The excess of petty politics.* Instead of a transparent democratic construction, what is currently coined with the term of *petty politics* dominated: the predomination of the internal logic of the political system as to the realization of the functions of the political system within the global society; the fight for power, based on the principle that 'all is fair in politics', the abolition of any morals. In 1990, a political actor of the first rank voiced his opinion thus: 'The political game is above morals'. Tacitly, the political interests of the groups are often systematically placed above the fundamental principles of democracy.

The fight for power went beyond the logic of creating a large consensus around the national interest. The political maneuvers and the fight among parties have emptied public debates of any content. Probably that the large preference of the population for Ion Iliescu is explained precisely through this lag. The central theme of his political behavior – the focus on the common interest and the promotion of a large consensus – answered the diffuse expectations of the collectivity.

Rejecting the exploration of alternatives, complementary with improvised reforms. In the first years of transition there was a surprising ideological theme: blaming *originality*. There was pejorative talk of 'our flaw, the Romanians, is not be original where it is not the case'; the expression 'our so-called original democracy' had become a label stuck on any idea that would stray from the dogmatized model of the new society. The fear of originality is hard to explain in an era of innovation and discovery. Its roots lie in what I call an *epistemology of single-solution problems*. There is only one historical path (transition) and only a single strategy of transition, presupposed to univocally reflect the experience of Western countries. What must be done is to decisively implement the reforms contained in this strategy. The attempt to explore alternatives was suspected to be the veiled expression of communist mentalities, which only delay reform or even block it by invoking originality. The distorting effect of this epistemology appears especially in the conception of democracy. Democracy no longer has any connection with 'the will of the collectivity', as the latter could be 'politically incorrect', the bearer of a communist-type of mentality. Paradoxically, democracy tended to become equivalent with the adoption of the program of reform and its rapid implementation, regardless of the will of the masses that are often 'backward'. The radical political groups defined themselves, following this line of reasoning, regardless of the point of view of the 'mass', as *the true democrats*.

This dogmatic authority of the strategy of change took the paradoxical form of *change at all costs*. The first years of the government installed in 1997 represented a paranoia of reform. The new political actors installed in governmental positions perceived themselves as being the apostles of reform: any change that crossed their minds over night was presented as ‘the true reform’; any doubt cast on its quality was severely repressed with the label of ‘antireform’. This game of frenetic innovations seems to have been founded on the following reason: *the quality of the reform is not very important; any change is positive, representing a distancing from the danger of lingering within the communist structures*.

As a result of the multiple distortions in public relations, the medium of political communication, oversaturated with conflicts and partisan accusations, with a surprising inappetence for the discussion of directions and strategies of change, gave the community the impression of replacing the ‘communist lie’ with a type of ‘anticommunist lie’.

5. *The frequent request of Romanian political forces for external support in the fight with the other political forces.* The prestige of the Western political forces cannot annul the fundamental rule of democracy that political parties must build up their power on internal electoral support. Contrary to this rule, some parties have solicited openly and continually for political support from the western forces in the fight against political opponents. The spreading, at an international level, of some serious accusations against the political adversaries was a frequent practice. Complementary, some Western political forces have actively supported, under different forms, the internal political struggles, taking over accusations maneuvered by the political parties that they deemed credible, without a thorough examination.
6. *Ideological paternalism.* One of the powerful sources of confusion was the contradiction *ideological maturation versus external ideological paternalism*. The crucial support awarded by the Occident to the process of transition very often took on the form of a political and ideological paternalism with perverse effects on the consolidation of a responsible and active democratic system. Not just once, the Western institutions and political actors have assumed the positions of judges and, further more, have brutally and irresponsibly intervened in the internal political dynamics. The inevitable effect was the braking of the internal process of maturation and assuming the responsibility, and the passive-rendering of the collectivity. The examples are numerous. Economy became the problem of the IMF. Abandoned children became far less a problem of the collectivity and more the one of baroness Nicholson and the US ambassador in Romania and so on and so forth.
7. *Tying the citizen to his armchair in front of the TV.* In order to understand the post-revolutionary state of mind, one must take into consideration the shocking effect of *powerless watching in front of the TV* of the show displayed by political

struggles. The entire deployment of the political events has consolidated the alienation of the citizen from political life.

The first disaggregating shock for the hopes of freedom and democracy was triggered even from the first days after the Revolution. A new type of powerlessness was crystallized overnight. If the powerlessness facing Ceaușescu's regime was a clearly understood and accepted as inevitable, due to the visible, brutal exercise of force, the new powerlessness was terribly frustrating for it stemmed in processes beyond any grasp. It is useful to make an exercise of empathy. Let us imagine the state of mind of those who, after Ceaușescu's overthrow, returned home expecting to be consulted or, at least, the action performed in their names to be conducted in a transparent manner for them. In exchange, turning on the TV, they become the powerless spectators of some terrifying events. Going out in the street to overthrow Ceaușescu's regime was a reasonable, heroic, unanimously sustained decision. But the new mobs seen on TV, incited and manipulated by invisible groups, seemed to attempt to seize power, triggering a legitimacy-less violence with unintelligible intentions. If the riot against a visible enemy – Ceaușescu – coagulated the population in the street, the emergence of violent 'faceless' groups left the population disarmed, lacking the mechanisms of mobilization and action. For those outside Bucharest, the broadcasted show of street violence in the capital was to generate a powerless anger. The Romanian Revolution was the first televised revolution. The despair of retirement in the homes was also amplified through the television channels.

The only social groups that could be mobilized for the defense of the collectivity against the violent pressures of such groups devoid of legitimacy were the workers from the large enterprises. In January, FNS⁸ organized a counter-manifestation in Bucharest, mobilizing the workers who answered with promptitude. In the provinces also, a similar state of mind was engendered: the workers, the only force at the moment with a certain capacity of organization, were paralyzed, although they felt the urge to come to Bucharest to defend not a certain force, but statehood, which would function in a democratic manner. Out of unclear reasons, probably due to lack of trust in the capacity of mobilization of the different groups of workers, some political actors have solicited the coming of the miners, that is the segment that appeared to have the best organization and were easy to mobilize. At the moment, such a call seemed somewhat justified to many, although excessive. At the beginning, the miners appeared to be answering an expectation of a large part of the population who lay worried and powerless. Facing an undemocratic threat, with unclear political forces, the new weak statehood had to be defended.

The Crisis of State Institutions

⁸ National Salvation Front. Initially, NSF was conceived as a political transitory formation, as a national coalition that would promote the organization of election. At the end of January '90, the leadership of NSF took the highly contested decision to turn into a political party as a reaction against the already constituted 'historical parties'.

The change of the state system was performed in a short period of time. However, complementary, a strongly deficient functioning of the state institutions is recorded, which could be summarized thus:

- low capacity to promote a democratic system in agreement with collective aspirations;
- during the first post-revolutionary period, a certain deficit of the state authority was inevitable. The change of regulations created significant confusions of authority. Even then, there were attempts, with relatively good results, to maintain statehood, law and order. In the rarefied space of authority, the interests of political groups, external and internal economic actors but also quasi-mafia like groups were successfully infiltrated;
- insufficient willpower to ensure the protection of the security of the citizen: if in the first years the police was timorous due to its former position in the communist regime, soon it was reactivated, but its reactions were in many sectors and cases still tardy and with low efficiency;
- the abuse of state institutions in what concerns the citizen: the vulnerability of the population towards the oppressive communist regime was replaced with a new vulnerability towards a public authority paralyzed bureaucratically and even, in some cases, inclined towards the exploitation of the first through the mechanisms of corruption. One cannot ignore the cases where the state institutions, instead of protecting the citizens of abuse, became the instrument of abuse of different groups of interests or individuals. The recent case (March 2004) of the sexual abuses of the policemen in Ialomița are a startling example from this point of view. Not the abuse in itself is shocking, but the fact that it represents just a situation that surfaced as the tip of some quite common practices, to which the feeling of the collectivity that is lacking power is added, namely to defend itself against such conducts;
- the reduced capacity to project and coordinate the economic and social reforms;
- the slow rhythm of rehabilitation of the communal infrastructure, roads and public utilities: it is only in the last years that road-building has been re-launched. The public system of home heating is in a situation of crisis, without a foreseeable plan of solving it. The rehabilitation and extension of the system of water supply and sewerage are heavily delayed;
- the policy of social support, whose necessity was accentuated for the compensation of the severe deteriorations of the state of society in the process of transition, was rather minimalist. The population paid the high cost of a difficult transition and not lacking in confusions and errors. Processes of social disaggregation, serious not so much as through their amplexity, but as through their future effects, were deficiently and hesitantly dealt with.

The theme of the necessity to 'tighten the belt', however good it may have sounded in an activist ideological perspective, had two fundamental flaws. On the one hand, its combination with the acceleration of the polarization of benefits, with the overnight enriching of a reduced segment of the population and the impoverishing up to misery of a

large segment, created a profound moral crisis. The high availability of the population to accept sacrifices was not morally sustained by ensuring a minimally accepted level of equitation. On the other hand, such a sacrifice represented, on the medium and long term, a degradation of social capacities, whose resorption will prove to be not only difficult, but also costly. The actual 'social costs' will generate in the future adverse factors for the re-launch of the society: generation with a deficient academic and professional level, large segments of the population suffering from the processes of social disaggregation pushed into the grey areas of social life.

The Case of Justice

Paradoxically, justice became one of the most important sources of disaggregation of the Romanian society. At the time it is in the top (if not at the top) of the institution with a high degree of corruption. In a public survey, in October 2003, 60% of the population assessed that the judges are *almost entirely/a great part of* corrupted. In fact, justice contributed to offering a legal shelter for many acts of corruption and transgression of the law, had an important contribution to the impoverishing of the population, through preferential distribution of justice towards the wealthy areas, to the detriment of the poor ones, as well as through the high *cost* of the appeal to justice. Justice represented an important generator of social polarization and impoverishment. The groups that dispose of large financial resources have frequently obtained, through the medium of justice, at the edge of the law and frequently beyond it, access to state resources, but also to the ones of the citizen deprived of the means to make him competitive in the corrupt and costly system of justice.

One of the negative effects of justice was the marginalization of the non-judicial mechanisms to solve different problems and, complementary, an explosive increase in their court solving. According to the estimations of the Minister of Justice, 1 of 2 persons was involved in a lawsuit or had a request before a judicial organ (secretary of state Simona Maia Teodoroiu, interviewed in *Adevărul*, 20 January 2004). The laws of property retrieving, especially of land and houses, have become great generators of lawsuits.

This effect has three important components: the accentuation of *confliction*, the increase in *time* and *financial costs* as to the solving of the problems, complementary with great fluctuations of the quality of the solutions themselves.

Fundamental laws for the regulation of important areas for the increase of authority and correctness of the functioning of judicial institutions were passed with great delay. It is only in 2001 that laws such as the fight against corruption, transborder organized crime and traffic of human beings were enacted. Complementary, insufficiently elaborated forms of some laws and their frequent alteration maintained confusions in the judicial system, having important effects of social disorganization.

The deficient solving of the problem of priority and sequentiality of change represented a crucial source of the malfunctioning of justice. The establishing of the priorities of reform represents a typical example of wrongly approached problem, from a strategic point of view. Even from the beginning of transition, the priority strategic objective was the *independence of justice from the politic*. The main instrument promoted for the realization of this objective was the introduction of the **inamovibilitatii** of the judges. But

the unilateral singularization of this approach represents the source of a set of difficult problems. In fact, the reform of the juridical system does not exclusively confront with the ensuring of the political independence of justice, rather with a simultaneous couple of problems: *political independence* and *control*. Alongside ensuring the independence of justice, it was vital from the beginning also the control over the act of justice, aspect that is much more important in the periods of rapid change. In the first period of transition it is hard to say which was the most destructive component in the functioning of the institution, the intervention of the politic or the lack of control over the juridical act. The public opinion assesses that the lack of control over justice is the most important factor responsible for the low quality of the justice act and especially for the high level of corruption. The unilateral accentuation by of the Occident of the political independence has as unintentional perverse effect the inhibition of the development of the mechanisms of control over justice. A structural unbalance was created thus: justice became the only important component of the public system that, not being under a sufficient control, is above the law. A democratic system with a normal functioning is founded on the ensuring of some means of mutual control of all the components. The promotion of *inamovibilitatii* of the justice body without having prepared the means to control the quality of the juridical act is now considered by many observers as an important source of corruption and low quality of the justice act.

Recent violent accusations, formulated by some of the Western actors, that justice is politically controlled and that urgent measures must be taken to ensure its independence, when, actually, its most serious problem is still the deficit of the mechanisms of public control, constitutes a clear example of imposing some inadequate priorities.

Two conclusions are important here:

Firstly, the choice, explicitly, or moreover, tacitly, of an epistemological model has effects on the process of choice of the strategy and action.

The epistemology of single-solution problems engenders a line of own reasoning. If the strategy of transition was correct, it was to be expected that the process of change would go satisfactory. But what happens when the strategy itself is the source of failures? These tend to be presented just as errors in the application of the strategy or as effects of the intervention of some external factors. Leibniz's paradigm of the possible worlds is reedited: 'We perpetually live in the best possible world.' The transition that we have adopted molds the best world possible. But such a paradigm is less credible in nowadays. The epistemology of multiple-solution problems opens a whole other line of reasoning. The selected strategy is not the only one possible and not necessarily the best. Negative phenomena can be the result of a poorer strategy; a new strategy could minimize or eliminate the negative effects.

Secondly, the strategy of transition does not represent a strictly cognitive product of reason, according to the ancient myth of the birth of Athens, the goddess of wisdom, who is born out of Zeus's head, but the products of the action of a multitude of social actors, external and internal. The external actors had a determinant role. And also the internal actors had an important contribution, but a rather secondary one, on the background of the strategic orientations formulated by the external actors. The next chapters are

dedicated to the strategy of transition as a product of external and internal actors and the manner in which their interests, preferences, stereotypes have molded the strategy of transition.

PART 2

Epistemological Prolegomena of a Theory of Transition

Chapter 4

A Few Epistemological Conditions for the Constitution of a Scientific Theory of Societies in Transition

The Sociology of Transition: Another Type of Sociology?

It is important to examine a key-question: in the world nowadays, is there just one paradigm of sociology, which applies to different realities, or different paradigms?

I do not think that we can talk of several sociologies. Sociology is a science with unique theoretical and methodological principles. But it can exhibit large variations function of the social reality according to which it is developed. The differences in social configuration generated different angles of approach, with relatively different theoretical and methodological structures. It is more productive to go beyond the estimate, correct at a general level, but rather superficial, that there is only one sociology and to pay a greater attention to the variety of tools pertaining to sociological thinking. We are still far from a unique paradigm of sociology. Rather there is *a multitude of paradigms, with varied degrees of communality/differentiation*.

Societies in transition exhibit important differences from the Western societies through their mechanisms of change/functioning, the analysis of which presupposing consequently distinct theoretical and methodological tools. As such, we can expect that the analysis of this type of societies on the basis of the Western paradigm of sociology present the risk of some important distortions.

The differences in social problematics, generating distinct sociological themes, are placed, mainly, on three dimensions: *the researched reality, the attitude of the community regarding the social reality and the directions and mechanisms of reality change, which the community explores*.

Sociology in Developed Capitalist Societies

Social reality in Western countries is characterized by a high degree of structuring and a high stability of the fundamental structures and institutions, within which there is a continuous process of change. This confers them a high coefficient of legitimacy, which turns reality into something solid, without alternatives. The changes of the system are not the result of some major crises, but of the cumulation of punctual perfecting and adaptation as an answer to new problems. These are 'one step at a time' changes that, through cumulation, produce global modifications that have not been planned. Change is not systematically projected and analyzed by intentional actions, but it is a 'natural,

‘organic’ and very legitimate process accepted by the community. ‘Revolutions’, in the sense of highly visible and accentuated changes, take place at the margin of the existing structure: the change of the position of the woman in society, tolerance towards ‘alteration’ (towards ethnic differences, sexual orientations), fight against sexual violence/aggression, counteracting social exclusion.

Such a form of the process of change is to be clearly found in the configuration of political institutions. These do not develop political programs of global change, on long-term planning. The existent political programs contain punctual objectives, generated as an answer to current problems.

As a consequence, the sociology constituted in the Occident is centered on the description and explanation of *existent reality*.

The attitude of the collectivity is of fundamental acceptance of the existent structural-institutional ensemble, perceived as organically constituted and functional in its entirety.

It is natural for sociology to partake such an attitude of acceptance of reality, its critical orientation centering on marginal problems that the society confronts with. Social change is not produced by sociology, in its quality of scientific knowing of global social reality, but by *institutional knowledge and action*. Social institutions, to which social movements are added, are the active and innovative initiators of social construction. Sociology rather records the accomplished changes and much less tries to initiate and project them. In its active hypostasis, sociology centers on the punctual perfecting of the system, on the solving of endemic problems of the actual society (delinquency, for example) or structurally marginal: interethnic tensions and conflicts, drug addiction, overponderousness etc.

Marxist-revolutionary Sociology

The sociology initiated in the 19th century by Marx was centered on the change through revolution of the capitalist society. The chance of developing this paradigm was annulled by its replacement with an ideological approach, subordinated to the activity of communist parties. Some developments, independent of the ideology of political parties, can be found in Latin America.

The researched reality is the one of the 19th century capitalist society or the 20th century underdeveloped societies, strongly antagonized from a social point of view.

The attitude towards the capitalist reality was founded, on the one hand, on the structural critique of the latter, and on the other hand, on the attempt to articulate a program of structural change.

The change in view was centered on the promotion, through *revolution*, of a new model of social organization instead of the existing one.

Sociology in the Communist Countries

The constitution of communist societies generated, inevitably, a change in the configuration of the sociology practiced in their midst. If at the beginning, sociology was rejected with the label of ‘bourgeois science’, after its acceptance, it was subjected to a strong political and ideological pressure. The communist regimes tried to impose the

constitution of a 'Marxist' sociological paradigm, which would express the point of view of the communist parties.

In reality, the sociological practice eclectically and contradictory combined three different tendencies:

- *the sociology loyal to the communist program* was centered on the attempt to identify the means of action in order to impose the communist project of social construction. Such a sociology could not be realized in the parameters of the science itself, being subordinated to the dogmatism of the ideological and political program of the Soviet type communist parties. Political pressure made the program of the sociology loyal to the communist model strand in pure ideology;
- *the application of Western sociology, including the national sociological traditions, to the particular problems of socialist societies*: focusing on themes with limited political and ideological implications – migration village/city, adaptation to urban/industrial life, explicative factors for delinquency – , sociology was able to obtain, in a large measure, an ideologically neuter position. This sociology tried to keep itself away from the domains connected to the communist program of social reconstruction, pretending, in general, that it served it;
- *the sociology of reformist orientation*, having as objective the promotion of the processes of change of the existent communist society, on the directions of modernization, rationalization, democratization, centering on the needs of the population: and this sociology was massively inspired from the Western sociology.

In the Romanian sociology, developed with great difficulties in the socialist regime, we find all these orientations (Zamfir, 2001). The re-launch of sociology in the 60s' Romania was made under the promise of developing a sociology loyal to the communist program of social construction. The representative of this orientation was Miron Constantinescu, who presided the reintroduction of sociology in socialist Romania, following the clear lineaments of a dogmatic communist ideology. The tentative to develop a new Marxist sociology lead to a scientific practice that oscillated between the Western style of sociology and communist ideology. For the sociology loyal to the communist program, reality was looked upon as a process in transition that contains yet unreformed elements (the *remains* of the old reality), intertwined with the *new elements* that prefigured the future communist reality. The deepening gap between the program of communist construction and the real society excluded the development of a sociology loyal to the communist project. It lingered on in the illusions of a group of sincere supporters of the communist program. For the reformist sociology, the communist program of reconstruction imposed a structuring of social reality with very important distortions and negative states. This reality was to be turned, one step at a time, into a little structurally specified direction, but characterized by modernization, infusion of rationality and science, assimilation of modern technology and social innovations of the Occident, democratization and focus on the needs of the population.

A special predilection was manifested, for the assimilation of those Western themes that granted opportunities to promote some reformist orientations, with the intention

to compel gradual change: the sociology of organizations, of human communities, of the quality of life, social psychology, especially the humanistic one.

Succeeding in offering scientifically valid products, sociology could not completely avoid certain eclectic options enforced by ideological pressure.

The evolution of sociology farther and farther away from the paradigm of communist ideology was, inevitably, to generate a hostile reaction from the communist regime that, since the end of the 70s, severely marginalized sociology up to suppressing it.

In the socialist countries, nor the Western ones, there did not exist a sociology of radical change of the socialist society through a coherent program, firmly implemented by the transition towards another model of social organization. Such a perspective became thinkable only at the end of 1989. Until then, sociological imagination could not identify as reasonably probable such a perspective.

The Sociology of Development through Reforms: Liquidation of 'Lags'

Such a sociology was developed in the societies that pertained to the Western world, entered on the same path to development, but occupying a position characterized by *lags*, 'falling behind'. Romania, during the second half of the 19th century and the first half of the 20th century, is a typical case. The Romanian sociology of the interwar period, especially representative being the *Bucharest Sociological School*, developed a distinct paradigm, centered in the program of *social reform*, substantially different from the Western sociology.

The reference frame of the sociology of these societies was the exemplarity of the Western society. In comparison, the situations of 'falling behind', 'lags' are identified, i.e. the situations of 'underdevelopment' that must be liquidated. The focus of analysis of the Bucharest Sociological School on the village is not at random, for it is the most 'backward' area of the Romanian society.

Adopting a program of active implication in change, sociology was centered on the identification of the means of action that would do away with underdevelopment: support for the reform of the institutions, values, mentalities, assimilation of Western institutions/science/technology.

It is interesting to notice a particularity of the then program of reforms, totally different from the one of reforms in the actual societies in transition. The programs of reform from that period were an internal product of the countries 'lagging behind'. There was no program of development for those countries initiated by the developed states.

The Sociology in the Underdeveloped Societies

The situation of the poor countries, severely underdeveloped in comparison with the Occident, with few chances to overcome underdevelopment is radically different from the ones of the states that exhibit just situations of 'lagging behind' and the more from the countries in 'transition'.

Underdeveloped countries are dominated by chronic structural crises, of a continuous instability of the institutional system, but also by the difficulty to elaborate articulated programs of development. As characteristics, we find the effort to liquidate

underdevelopment, but also the failures that have become endemic. Here too, we find objectives of development, but the strategies of action are poorly efficient. Consequently, the efforts of socio-economic change have an oscillating character, interrupted by crises/abandonment/new searches.

The social reality of these countries is characterized by the disorganization of the traditional social forms and structures, but without containing sufficiently contoured tendencies of development that would indicate the positioning on a credible trajectory of development. During the last decades, the underdeveloped countries did not reduce their lags, but, on the contrary, the latter have accentuated. Internal social polarization is also particularly accentuated, generating social and political conflicts that burst out, not seldom, into civil wars.

In the last 50-60 years, after the former colonies have obtained their independence, four types of programs of development have prefigured in the area: programs initiated and sustained by the international organizations in the name of the Occident (World Bank, IMF); programs of the communist type, quite frequent in the 60s-70s sustained especially by the Soviet Union; programs of the fundamentalist type, centered on the own cultural-religious traditions, more frequent during the last two decades; finally beginner stages of 'step by step' reform. A characteristic of the sociology from these societies is the critical orientation towards the international arrangements that maintain underdevelopment.

The tendencies to crystallize sociology in these societies are strongly braked not due to lack of intellectual resources, but rather by the paralyzation of the chances of social development.

Sociology in Societies in Transition

The former communist societies in transition exhibit a totally different profile of change. We can expect that within the societies 'in transition' a distinct type of sociology of development be crystallized. The reality, as object of analysis, as well as the process of change in itself is different from those in Western societies. Sociology centers on a new type of change: social development realized on the basis of strategies and programs.

The change of the societies in transition is *global, as well as sectorial*. It is not a change 'step by step', rather the cumulated result of punctual changes, unplanned, but a *projected, planned* change, realized in rapid rhythm. The key-concepts are *reform* and *strategy of transition*. The *reform* represents an orientation of continuous action of the actors to modify the existent organization, global, as well as sectorial. The *strategy of transition* represents a structured program of change in the view of the realization of a new model of society, different from the existent one. The implementation of a new social structure and its complementary institutional system are established as objective of social construction. The configuration of the existent reality is not accepted, but it is a reality to change.

The fall of communism placed sociology in front of a combination of three distinct types of social reality:

1. the *virtual reality*, considered to be the 'true', 'normal' reality, highly desirable and that is the *existent reality* in the developed capitalist societies:

for the countries in transition, it is a *reality that does not yet exist*, but that must be built instead of the *existent reality* produced by the communist program;

2. the *initially existent reality* is an *abnormal, illegitimate and undesirable* reality, artificially produced by a distorted history, the result of the failed communist project of social development. Consequently, it is less interesting to be recorded as such as even less to be explained. It is merely the object of critique and elimination;
3. the *reality of the process of transition* represents a contradictory and tense mixture of old reality, to be changed, and new reality, whose process of implementation has already started. It contains processes of change, old structures in disorganization and new structures in configuration and consolidation, to which transitory interactions between the two types of structures are added. To this mélange of 'old' reality and 'new' reality, the *action of change* is added, which is a central component of the *reality of transition*.

The reality of the process of transition is not interesting in itself. It is not a structured and sedimented reality, a functional system, but something transitory, filled with 'remains', realities already changed/insufficiently changed; it is characterized by contradictions and lags.

It is natural for sociology to not be interested in the description of the reality left over by the communist experiment, merely limited to the confused reality of transition. From the active perspective of a new reality, sociology was interested moreover in the process of change, in the strategy of change and, especially, in the difficulties/failures in the realization of the assumed objectives, in the *measurement* of the lag between the *true* reality to be built and the *existent* reality to be eliminated.

Facing the reality of transition, sociology is confronted with a new challenge. Its objective is not the one of describing and explaining a highly structured and institutionalized reality, but one in the process of change, by virtue of a global strategy elaborated by the social actors and implemented through their actions. The sociology of transition must be more a *constructive sociology*, which subordinates the *explicative sociology*. As well, its object is the constitution of the explanation for a social reality in its global perspective, and not of some particular phenomena. Sociology, as it was constituted in the past, proved to be poorly prepared to accomplish these objectives:

As a consequence, a sociology of transition must orient itself towards new cognitive objectives:

- a) the identification of the *strategy* of change, formulated by the collectivity and used in collective action: sociology does not yet hold a methodology of identification of the strategy of change formulated and functioning in complex network of communication and authority. Many analysts wonder if there really is a sufficiently articulated and coherent strategy or rather a large variety of strategic options, often incongruent;
- b) the constitution of a 'strategy' and its change represent a social process that is another legitimate object of description and explanation. Beyond some timid

- attempts, there are no sufficiently articulated analyses to explain the social mechanisms through which the strategic options are elaborated and adopted by social actors. What is still dominant is the explanation of the strategy of transition not from a *social perspective*, but from a *cognitive* one. The justification of the strategic options is deduced more from theories than from the social process of their occurrence. More and more salient has become the idea that the strategic options are not generated by a pure logic of economic, sociological, political science thought, but are rather the product of a complex of social, economic and political processes;
- c) the analysis of the process of change: the realization/un-realization of the program of change, the successes and failures, resistances to change, écart between the objectives to achieve and what was actually accomplished;
 - d) the complex effects of the action of change, the intentional one, as well as the unintentional one; the interaction between the elements of the existent reality that do not form yet a structured whole;
 - e) overcoming the illusion regarding the high transparency of the process of transition: we begin to realize that the reality of transition is different from the expectations of the actors that have built it, that it not as intelligible as they believe it to be. Moreover, we begin to doubt the fact that the actors of change really understand why they have adopted a particular strategy of change and not the other.
 - f) beyond the empirical identification of the strategy employed by the social actors, there is no evaluative analysis of the phenomenon as such. Is it an adequate strategy? Are there possibly better alternatives, which have not yet been explored?

Social Action and 'Ideas' as Objects of Knowledge

'Social action' and 'ideas' produced by society present a distinct epistemological status in various types of society. In stable societies, highly structured, the actions of the actors and their ideas do not exhibit, in themselves, a high degree of interest for sociology. They are produced by the profound *structures* of society and are molded by the existent *institutions*, and it is hence that they must be explained. Reality is produced by the functioning of consolidated structures, not by the ideas of the actors. The role of ideas, programs, plans, including the action of the actors is marginal. They too are a reality, but a secondary reality, moreover an *epiphenomenal* one, reflexes of the 'true' reality and less factors generating reality.

In the societies in transition, the action and ideas of the actors exhibit a totally different epistemological status. They are not a secondary reality, but the very generator of reality. The reality of actual societies in transition is not generated by their profound structures, but by the collective action of change oriented by *strategic* options. The ideas that take on the form of the strategy of transition represent a primary reality, *much more significant than the existent reality at a given time*. The privileged object of sociological analysis is, consequently, *the strategy of change and the action of change*, but not the existent reality in itself.

There is a substantial difference also in what regards the attitude towards 'social ideals'. The dynamics of stable societies is not governed by the ideals of the actors. Very often

they represent rather overt expressions of the frustrations generated by social reality and that do not necessarily guide the change in itself. In actual societies in transitions, the ideals, materialized in the strategy of action, represent the motor instruments of social change.

The political system is singularized as a component with a much more marked contribution to social molding than within stable societies. Through *content* – the chosen strategy, the multitude of decisions regarding all the spheres of action –, as well as through *form* – the manner in which the main political forces were configured and have interacted –, the political process affected in many ways the whole dynamics of the society in transition. A new explicative field begins to take contour for sociology: the variations of the structures produced by political factors become much more ample than within the stable societies.

Producing the Strategy: Scientific or Institutional Knowledge?

The strategies of action area *social construct* that utilizes, in different degrees, two types of knowledge: scientific knowledge, produced by the academic system, and institutional knowledge.

A more attentive analysis of the manner of constitution of the strategy of transition highlights the fact that the latter was not the direct product of economic and social sciences, although they have represented an important resource. The strategy of transition is the intellectual product of a complex of institutions, the most important pertaining to the Western world: government, international institutions such as the Council of Europe, the European Commission, the International Labor Organization, the economic and socio-economic institutions controlled by Western governments, the most important being the IMF and the World Bank. The institutional intellectual products cannot be encountered under the typical form of those specific to the scientific community (books, studies), the result of the efforts of individual researchers, and which circulated in a network of influences and controversies, always provisory and openly crystallized in a scientific type of corpus. In science there are no institutional authorities that subject the ideas to some proceedings of ratification, approval and organizational enforcement. Science rejects any form of enforcement of the validity of ideas through authority.

Although the actual institutions massively use the results of scientific research, they function by producing a specific knowing, that they call *institutional knowledge*. Institutional knowledge represents a huge *network of communication and intellectual and political-institutional interaction*, realized in an institutionally controlled manner, in which the social-political authority has an essential role, being sustained by the different means of power.

Three distinctive characteristics of institutional knowledge must be mentioned.

Firstly, it is strongly *action oriented*. The objective of institutional knowledge is not to describe/explain/foresee reality, but to change it. In its core lies a *strategy of action*, complemented by the supportive *ideology* of this strategy. IMF does not have a global theory of world economy. The elements of such a theory are produced only to sustain the conception of the policy of intervention in the support of national economies. In its turn, the World Bank has the objective, fixed by its leading body, of sustaining the state in

their fight against poverty and for socio-economic development. The institutions elaborate complex strategies of action, modifying them in time.

Secondly, institutional knowledge is finalized in strategic decisions of actions, adopted by mechanisms of authority. The leading body of the institutions decides which the objectives to achieve are and the directions of action. The strategy elaborated within the institution is adopted through mechanisms of institutional decision and becomes the official orientation of the institution. Means of power/authority/persuasion are used also to make the strategies to be accepted by the beneficiaries.

Thirdly, institutional knowledge is not the product of the community of scientists, although, beyond doubt, many scientists (economists, sociologists, anthropologists etc.) contribute to its constitutions from the outside (through their theories and opinions), as well as from the inside, as employees. The institutions nowadays are great consumers of products of science, but, on the other hand, themselves are great producers of knowledge through a continuous processing of accumulated experience, but also of assembling specific knowledge under the form of strategies and programs of action. If science, by its nature, represents a conglomerate of knowledge individually produced, with mutual confrontations and verifications, while, in principle, there is no organized procedure of identification of a 'point of view of science', institutional knowledge exhibits a high coherence, being assembled around some strategies of action decided through the mechanisms of authority.

As product of an *institutional complex*, the strategy of transition cannot be found anywhere exposed in a systematic form, but it exists as an ideational structure in a network of communication and interaction, founded on authority and power. It was constituted over time, with additions imposed by the new problems, with fluctuations and continuous modifications function of the results of its application.

In order to systematically describe such collective ideational configurations, with a great fluidity, developed by modern institutions, sociology does not yet hold a sufficiently elaborated methodology.

Explaining the Transition: Ideology and Science

The community and, especially, the active actors in the process of transition need a conception that would supportively explain the objectives and means of construction of a new type of society, therefore an *ideology*, in the general sense of the term of collective conception (on the signification of the concept of *ideology*, see for further details Zamfir, 1999). Such a popular conception on transition was elaborated through the contribution, mainly, of the institutions engaged in the process of change, of the specialists in the diffusion and popularization of the strategy of transition in the mass-media and much less by the scientific community.

The explicative ideological theory is different as process of elaboration and verification from the scientific theory. It is the product of institutional knowledge. If sociology, in its quality of science, did but marginally contribute to the constitution of the institutional theory (ideology) of transition, it also does not have a global theory on societies in transition, built by its own means, with the mechanisms and standard rules of science. Moreover, in the first part of transition, within the context of a general constructive enthusiasm, sociology borrowed, without a critical analysis, the institutional theory. Such

a borrowing is evident also in many theoretical and empirical researches carried out especially by Western sociologists, but also by the national ones, usually commissioned and financially supported by international institutions involved in the elaboration of the strategy of transition. It is only in the last few years, when the institutional strategy of transition began a period of critical reanalysis, that sociology is forced to engage itself in a critical-constructive analysis of global change, having the chance of constructing its own theories of transition. Only a critical examination of the options on the directions and strategies of transition offers sociology the opportunity of constructing its own theory of societies in transition. The observation of old Hegel is actual: 'The owl of Minerva (the symbol of reflexive thinking) soars in the twilight.'

Presently, sociology is not ready to assert its stand in a global, integrated manner on the process of transition and its options, but rather to raise critical questions, to stimulate the exploration of alternatives and to analyze the mechanism of constructing the strategy of transition that have oriented the action of social actors. But also to contribute to the change/correction of existent strategies. It developed less in its hypostasis of global theory of society and more in that of methodology of analysis of some punctual varied social problems.

In active societies, engaged in a process of projected change, there are some structural risks with which knowledge confronts itself.

The first risk is the one of taking over, without a critical analysis, the products of institutional knowledge: the strategy of change and its supportive ideology.

The second risk is the one of transforming the strategy of transition into a fundamental explicative matrix of the society at change. In other words, the project of change becomes, in the mind of the actors, the fundamental guide/matrix of perception and explanation for the reality. From this substitution results an *ideologically saturated knowledge*. The normative disciplines (economy, political science) become central in the elaboration of the explicative image of the society in transition, whereas sociology, as a descriptive-explicative discipline, passes into a secondary plan. The rules of producing the strategy of action do not coincide with the rules of describing the reality resulted from the action proper.

The Assimilation into a Common Paradigm of the Cognitive Perspective and the Social Perspective

The analysis of the societies engaged in a process of strategy oriented change lays before sociology a new challenge: the incorporation of the *cognitive perspective* and the *social perspective* into one explicative paradigm. The relation between the two perspectives represents for sociology a problem never before seriously tackled.

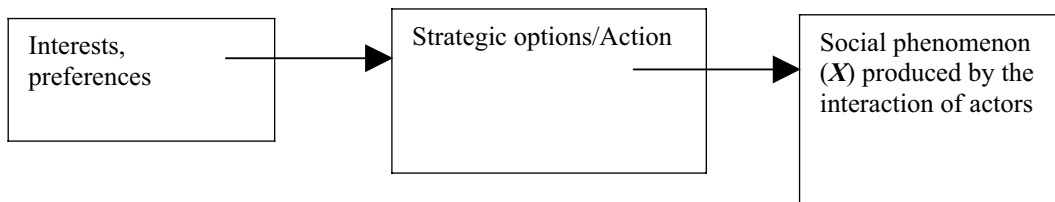
The cognitive perspective has as central theme the evaluation of a strategy of action from the point of view of its degree of cognitive adequateness: is it correct or not? How adequate is it in the view of achieving the global objective of change? The quality of the strategy has, definitely, complex effects on the life of the collectivity. It is natural for social actors to be always oriented towards discussing of the strategies of action from the point of view of their adequateness.

Classic sociology, developed around stable societies, characterized by a rather spontaneous process of change, parenthesized the cognitive quality of the strategies of

action formulated by the actors, treating them not as cognitive products, but as social ones. For sociology, the cognitive perspective is not its own, but belongs to the social actors. They choose, on their cognitive grounds, the strategies of action. The question whether the strategies formulated by social actors are good or bad solutions tends to be considered by sociology as an irrelevant issue for it. The core is the social perspective. In their quality of social facts, the strategies of the actors must be accounted for through other social facts, using Durkheim's famous words. Sociology must explain only the collective social process through which the actors, in their interaction, take one decision or the other, not how good or bad are the latter.

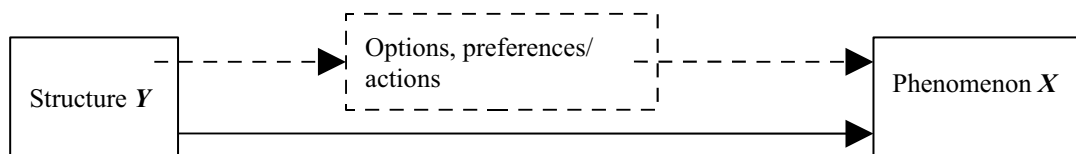
Sociology offers two types of explanations for the strategies of the social actors as social products, which are more complementary than exclusive.

The first type is the *explanation through social interaction* (graph 4.1). The collective strategies of action are the resultant of the interaction of social actors, animated by their distinct interests, preferences, schemes of thinking.



Graph 4.1. The interactionist explicative schema

The second type is the *structural explanation* (graph 4.2). Social reality represents a structured system. Social phenomena, at random, are, obviously, the result of the action of people, but the actions, in their turn, are the expression of profound structures of social reality. The actions of social actors – including their way of thinking, preferences – must be accounted for through the profound social structure. Such an explanation is founded on the *method of structural reduction* (Zamfir, 1999). For illustrative ends, I will use in a free formulation Marx's famous expression: *I (as sociologist, obviously) am not interested in what a proletarian thinks, feels or wants, or the whole proletariat at a given moment, but what the proletariat is determined to think, feel, want by virtue of its position within the capitalist system.* The X phenomenon is explainable through an Y structure of the social system. The growth of unemployment, the fall of the economy during transition etc. are the results of the multiple actions of actors, but they are the result of a profound structure: the process of restructuring of the economy in its passage from command economy to market economy. It is true that the social actors develop strategies of action, take decisions, act – privatization, introduction of market mechanism, liberalization of prices etc. All these constitute determining factors of the X phenomenon to be explained, but, on their turn, they are the expression of the structural dynamics (Y) of the social system and bear a more profound determinism. They appear only as *intermediary variables*, which can thus be *parenthesized* in the process of explanation.



Graph 4.2. The structural explicative schema

If the interactionist explicative scheme rules out as irrelevant the cognitive quality of the strategies of social actors, the scheme of structural explanation presupposes that, *by virtue of structural determinism*, the strategies of social actors are adequate. The social process of production is the one that ensures, ultimately, that the social actors choose the solutions imposed by the profound social structures. The cognitive errors of the actors must be regarded rather as accidental fluctuations that will be corrected by the structural mechanisms of the functioning of the society.

Societies in transition have put in a new view the problem of the relation between the two perspectives, the cognitive and the social one.

The interest for the exploration of the quality of strategic options, therefore for the cognitive perspective, is more and more accentuated. The strategy of transition is a *solution* to the *problem* of wanted and proposed social changes. Social actors, being free to choose between one strategy or the other, are, normally, concerned by questions about their correctness/adequateness. The question whether there are more possible options leading to the realization of the objectives of transition becomes central. Evaluation becomes a problem for the analysis of efficiency: efficacy (the degree of achieving the objectives) and the cost paid for using one solution or the other.

A dilemma arises here. On the one hand, there is the presupposition that social actors, who produce and continuously monitor the strategy of transition, are preoccupied to find the best solutions. On the other hand, sociology has demonstrated that social actors are characterized by interests and orientations exhibiting a significant variation, the common decisions being rather the result of interaction, negotiation among them. Therefore the question is: do the negotiated decisions express more cognitive reasons or the play of interests and orientations specific to the multitude of participants to the process?

There are two possible answers to this question:

The first, for which the actual theory of transition clearly opts, is the accentuation of the cognitive perspective. The theory of transition was tacitly founded on the postulate of *social-political neutrality of strategic options*. Strategic options do not express the social options of actors, but are naturally derived from the global objectives of transition and from the accumulated stock of knowledge. The actors that elaborate/adopt/sustain strategic options do it *without any particular social interest*, their sole interest being the one of ensuring the most adequate path of social change. Therefore it is supposed that the option for one strategy or the other is the result of a strictly cognitive evaluation, regarding its adequateness as to general criteria of efficiency, and not to any social criterion, or as to the interests of one group or the other. The theory of transition has thus tacitly presupposed that the strategy of transition:

- is a strictly cognitive product, and not a social one. There is nothing to explain from the perspective of social processes;

- is an adequate cognitive product, its correctness being beyond doubt.

The second answer, which has only recently begun to be taken into consideration, presupposes that the process of choosing between alternatives is a cognitive and social combination. Ultimately, social actors are characterized by a diversity of interests, value orientations, conceptions, fears that project in the constructing of strategies and determine options. From this perspective, the explanation of adopted strategies cannot take into consideration just the cognitive quality, but also the orientations of social actors. If we analyze the manner in which the strategy of transition was constituted and adopted, we observe that the selection of the strategy was characterized not so much by the neutral examination of alternative, in a strictly cognitive perspective, but, on the contrary, the option was imposed by powerful social actors using a combination of authority/power and justifying argumentations, fact that conferred a rather ideological allure to the process itself. This observation invalidates the presupposition of social-political neutrality of strategic options, sustaining, on the contrary, the operation of decisions through social mechanisms. The cognitive perspective delimits just a set of possible options. The selection of one or the other represents a social process, socially oriented.

If we want to understand why some strategies of transition were opted for, it is necessary to investigate the social-political process of constructing and choosing a strategy.

On the other hand, the interest for the examination of the cognitive validity of strategic options was from the beginning a central preoccupation for all actors. Who is in the best position to perform such an evaluation? Institutional knowledge, developed by the institutions involved in the elaboration of the strategy of transition, is characterized by a continuous centering about, declared on the examination of the strategy of transition from a cognitive perspective. Economy evaluates the correctness of the strategy of restructuring economy. Political sciences evaluate the options of change of the political system. Sociology presents, from this point of view, a certain lagging behind. It does not yet offer sufficiently articulated answers to the examination of the quality of the strategy of transition. It is therefore important, to ask ourselves if sociology can ignore such a cognitive perspective on the strategy of transition. Due to its globalism, the problem of the correctness of the strategy of transition cannot be evaluated by sectorial social disciplines. Only the global social perspective, for which sociology is more prepared, can offer such an evaluation. The classic approach of sociology seems in this context to have become unsatisfactory. Sociology was tempted to rid itself of the problem of cognitive evaluation either by handing down the problem – the quality of the strategy is the problem of social actors or sectorial disciplines –, or by postulating the correctness guaranteed by the prestige of the institutions that have elaborated it. However, it is nowadays more and more pressed upon to assume as necessary the examination, with its specialized instruments, of the cognitive quality of the strategy of transition.

Nowadays sociology exhibits a major deficit in tackling the strategy of transition not only from a cognitive perspective, but also from a social point of view. There are no analyses, besides some casual reflections, of the social process (actors, institutions, the interaction between them) through which the strategy of transition has been constructed or implemented. Sociology tended to share the illusion that the strategy of transition represents a simple cognitive product that is automatically entailed from the objective to achieve, correctly formulated by those that have constructed it.

The Epistemology of Single Solution Problems versus the Epistemology of Multiple Solution Problems

The option for one epistemological model or the other represents a crucial epistemological point in constituting sociology as a science in this new context. The explicative sociology, developed massively within stable societies, was not confronted with such an option. For it, social reality *is a given*. The role of science is to describe and explain it. The problem if there *could have been/could be another reality*, therefore the problem of alternatives, did not represent a scientifically legitimate preoccupation (for further details, see Zamfir, 1981).

The evaluation of a practiced strategy make the following question inevitable: are we always before a single option of choice? If not, is the existent option the best or there are others that could/could have been better?

The theory of human action underwent, especially in the last part of the past century, a structural change that I have called the passage from an *epistemology of single solution problems* to the *epistemology of multiple solution problems*.

The *epistemology of single solution problems* presupposes that any problem that is to be solved by action has a *single* correct/good/satisfactory *solution*; the other solutions that can be formulated are inadequate/bad/unsatisfactory. For the domain of knowledge, the epistemology of single solution problems we find formulated by Aristotle. The Greek philosopher coined it with a famous expression: *the truth is only one; falseness is presented under an infinity of forms*. When the man of science succeeds in formulating a theory that accounts for the fact in their integrality, he has reached the truth. Any other theory different from this one is false.

Up to the 20th century, philosophy, as well as science had an allergy towards *alternatives*. The notorious case is the one of *historical alternatives* (Zamfir, 1981).

History took a certain path due to some events connected in a causal chain. It is legitimate to examine problems such as ‘Could history have taken a different path?’, ‘*What would have happened if an event from this causal chain hadn’t taken place?*’. The answer that we currently find to this type of questions is a negative one, but not because ‘history could not have taken a different path’, but because the question itself is, for science, devoid of sense, illegitimate. It is likely that in this allergy towards historical alternatives we could identify an effect of the until recent orientation of sciences, the prototype of which were natural sciences. Science is an explicative type of knowledge: reality is a given; science must take it as such and explain why it is thus and no other way.

The new theory of decision puts this problem in a perspective different from the traditional one (Zamfir, 1990). The epistemology of single solution problems expresses, actually, a decisional process based on the satisfactory: *in conditions of persistent uncertainty, the decider tends to stop at the first satisfactory solution that he manages to identify* (the theorem was formulated by H. Simon and further explained by C. Zamfir). This theorem asserts that, in conditions of persistent uncertainty, the decider, after having found a satisfactory solution, not only ‘does not go further with the exploration of the possible’, but for him there *is no* ‘further’, ‘alternatives to the choice made’. If the actor manages to identify more solutions that could also be satisfactory, he would not have the means to decide which the best is. A good, satisfactory solution is the correct, real

solution. The question whether there are alternatives is not productive and, as a consequence, illegitimate.

In conditions of low capacity of formulation and evaluation of solutions, the strategy of the satisfactory implies two components. The first is the lack of interest for the search of alternatives or even the rejection of the meaning of alternatives. The second, less visible, is a defensive strategy towards the critique of the adopted solution. Such a critique would have counterproductive effect of the type: blocking the action, dropping low of the motivation for performance, social tensions and conflicts. The artificial growth of the certitude around the adopted solution is a mechanism that is an organic part of the behavior based on the rejection of alternatives. From this perspective, the very negation of the legitimacy of exploring alternatives represents a justifying ideology of already taken decision, having the function of artificially absorbing the uncertainty regarding the aforementioned decision.

Ideologies play an important part in this mechanism of supporting the already taken decisions and the rejection of the alternatives. The epistemology of single solution problems was encouraged by the hypostasis of sociology as an explicative science of social reality. The *taken decisions* are *social facts*, which must be explained through other social facts, and not as solutions to be chosen from a multitude of possible solutions. There are no alternatives because the chosen solution is the product of the actors 'out there', from the reality, who, in the interaction between them, have produced the respective solution. *Other* actors and *another* interaction would have produced *another* solution. The solutions produced by the various social interactions *are not alternatives*. Their exploration does not any meaning because history, as well as sociology, accounts for reality as it was produced, and not for *another reality, which, actually, did not exist, but which, eventually, could have existed*.

The alternatives are legitimate only in a cognitive context: to a problem there may be many possible solutions. They do not have any meaning in a 'sociological' perspective: a social process produces what it has produced.

The *epistemology of multiple solution problems* is a new frame in which the modern theory of decision is constituted. A sufficiently complex problem has many possible solutions, satisfactory in different degrees. In the context of this epistemology, before any solution, the question of the decider is not only if it is good or not, but also what are the alternatives to the respective solution and which is *the best*. The defensive elements are diminished. A cognitive opening towards the multitude of solutions is instituted and, consequently, an availability for change.

As I will try to prove in the present book, the adoption of one of the two epistemologies of the theory of action is not, with regard to the theory of transition, something marginal, but, on the contrary, it lays at the origin of the whole explicative construct, generating different explicative procedures and opening specific visibilities. Moreover, the placing within one epistemological model or the other has not only cognitive effects, but also distinct social, economic, political and moral ones.

The Double Perspective: Cognitive and Social

Social reality will appear differently if we look at it from the two perspectives. From the cognitive perspective, it represents the result of the *free choice* of social actors. They have displayed before them a multitude of solutions, some better, some worse. As a consequence, they can choose freely, being thus responsible for one course of action or the other. The choice of the strategy of transition, for example, and the discussions around it led by social actors are viewed, for instance, in the terms of the adequateness of the strategy: is the already made choice adequate? Could there be possibly better alternative solutions? From the social perspective, the chosen solution is the unique product of a given social reality, of the interaction of social actors, the problem of alternatives being illegitimate. The strategy of transition is the product of the interaction of a multitude of social actors. Sociologically speaking, it is the product of a social process and it is pointless to ask ourselves if it is good or not, and whether there could have been other alternatives. The question that raises an epistemological difficulty can be formulated, consequently, in the following terms: how can we assume that the solution generated by the interaction of various actors with their own interests, which are not coincident with the finding of the most suited solution, is nevertheless the most adequate, in a cognitive array?

The actual analyses contain a confusion between the two distinct plans: *the plan of the adequateness of the solution* and *the plan of interaction between social actors, with distinct cognitive images, interests and orientations*. These two plans do not exclude one another, but interact *in reality*. The plan of adequateness is based on *the cognitive logic* of the relation between *the end* and *the means*. The plan of the interaction of actors brings into the calculation of solution *the logic of the diversity of social interests*, which subjects the very achieving of the objective to the negotiation between actors.

In the context of this discussion, it becomes clear the fact that, when we analyze the strategy of transition, it is vital to opt for the perspective where we stand in. Is the chosen and practiced strategy of transition the best of all the possible alternatives? Or it is one of the possible, satisfactory solutions but not necessarily the best with regard to alternative strategies? And if we transpose the problem in the plan of social producing, through their interaction, do the social actors take or not into consideration the effects of the adopted solutions on the significant actors? The plurality of actors complicates the cognitive perspective: for whom is the solution adequate? The actors have common objectives, with regard to which the adequateness of a solution can be judged, but also different objectives, with regard to which the solutions have different degrees of adequateness.

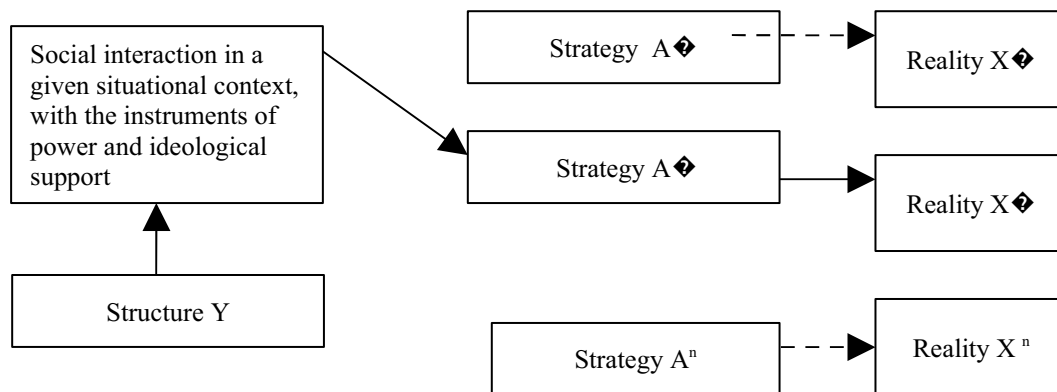
It is clear that the problem of explaining the choice of the strategy of transition must be simultaneously placed in the cognitive plan – how adequate it is –, as well as in the social one proper – the taking into consideration of the factors/social context of its elaboration and adoption. The strategy of transition is not only a purely cognitive solution to the problem of changing the former communist societies, but at the same time it is a solution constructed and negotiated by social actors with specific interests, orientations and intentions. The adoption of this strategy must therefore be examined from the point of view of its efficacy/efficiency, as well as from the point of view of the motivation of the social actors that have constructed it.

The P.I. Decision and the K.P. Decision

Applying the epistemology of multiple solution problems to sociological analysis evinces two types of mechanisms of taking decision of major social importance.

The *P.I. Decision*, illustrated in graphic 4.3, is produced through *social interaction*, with the means of *power* and cognitively sustained with the instrument of *ideology*.

For the realization of the forwarded social changed, structure Y (the logic of instituting a market economy, of a multiparty democracy) allows not only one strategy, but many alternative strategies, (A', A'', A'''...) having different degrees of adequateness. Every possible strategy will produce distinct effects (X', X'', X'''...): higher or lower economic and social costs, shorter or longer periods of economic re-launch, different degrees of social disorganization and anomy. The option for one strategy or the other, from the possibility of action delimited by structure Y, is operated by social actors, through their interaction. This scheme describes not a *process of choosing*, on the basis of analyzing the merits of the different alternatives, of one of them, but on a *process of constructing one of the possible strategies*, as the result of the interaction of actors. There are possible alternatives, but they are not formulated and analyzed, but the actors construct, within the limits of the possible range, the strategy that corresponds to their interests. Hence the alternatives tend to remain unformulated.

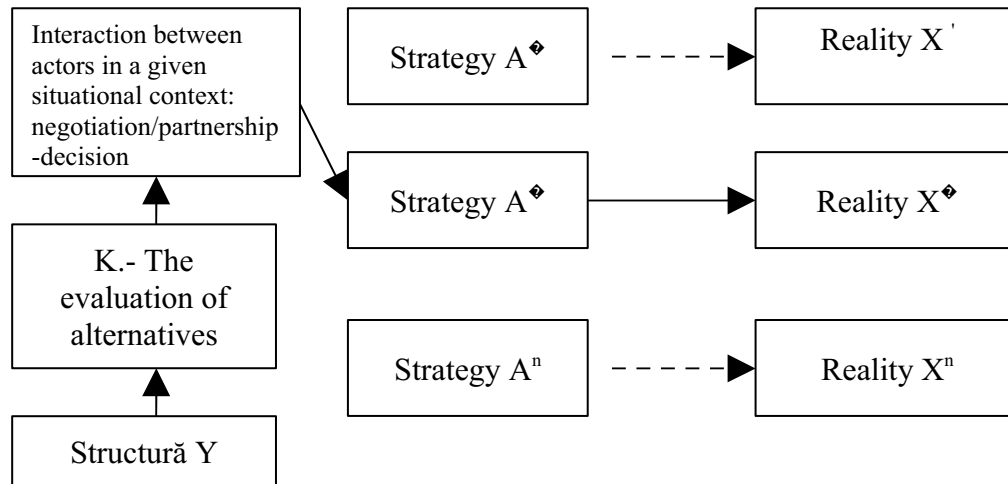


Graph 4.3. The schema of structural/interactionist combined explanation in the perspective of the epistemology of multiple solution problems.

The *K.P. Decision*, illustrated in graph 4.4, is chosen through social interaction from a set of objectively (*knowledge*) evaluated alternatives and on the basis of a commonly accepted value (*partnership*).

In this model of decision, the existent reality X, and which ought to be explained, is just one from a packet of possible alternative realities, explainable through structure Y. Structure Y only indicates that each and every one of the realities X can occur. The configuration of the interaction of actors and events can propel towards an X or the other, due to the operated strategic options. The profound structure determines the frame of the interaction of social actors, and this leads to the selection/construction of one of the possible alternative strategies, which generates a corresponding effect. The question

‘Could it not have happened otherwise?’ receives a more complex answer. Mainly, there were many possibilities. Everything depended on the actors who operated the strategic option of action. Therefore, the social actors represent the *selectors* from a set of alternative options.



Graph 4.4. The schema of the structural/interactionist combined explanation in the perspective of the epistemology of multiple solution problems, with the intervention of *knowledge* as selector.

The schema from graph 4.4 introduces a distinct factor: *knowledge of, evaluation of possible alternatives* (C). The social process described in this schema is different from the one in the preceding schema. It takes place over more phases. In phase one, more possible strategic alternatives of action are being formulated. In phase two, the possible strategies are being evaluated. Such an evaluation is performed *cognitively*, but also *socially*: the social actors, on the basis of their interests, estimate which is the best solution that suits them. In phase three, a solution is selected, on the basis of cognitive type of arguments, doubled by imposing, with the means of authority/social power or partnership, the convenient options. Knowledge does not suppress the diversity of the options generated by the interests of the actors. Instead it compels their explanation, the identification of their effects upon the other actors. Thus, knowledge becomes a factor that actively intervenes in the process of interaction and negotiation between actors and in the process of reaching consensus. Knowledge, therefore, acts through two distinct mechanisms. On the one hand, through the construction of alternative solutions, and on the other hand, through the neutral evaluation of alternatives and the identification of their effects upon the relevant social groups, thus facilitating constructive negotiation and the creation of consensus. As previously noted, cognitive estimation represents a distinct determining factor of options, which interacts with the other situational factors and that can generate a better selection.

The methodology of the sociological analysis of this process, as it is described in the model under discussion, is different from the one from the model based on the

epistemology of single solution problems. The first must combine the analysis of alternatives with the analysis of social actors, with their interests and preferences.

The methodological capacity of sociology to enter upon such an analysis is limited. For the analysis and evaluation of possible alternatives, it must engulf, besides the strictly social analysis, also the economic analysis of other sectorial disciplines.

Societies in transition, through their active profile, compel sociological analysis to develop, complementary to the explicative schema, also the constructive schema, to incorporate in its explicative schema the procedures of producing and exploring alternatives. The cognitive perspective tends to become a priority in active societies.

It is necessary to take into consideration also *the reconversion of the cognitive in the social*. The actors who take decisions by virtue of their own interests, in the confrontation with the other groups, at the ideological level, *covert the social process into an ideative one*. The already made options are presented as being cognitively well-grounded: they are the correct, adequate options that lead to desirable results. If the process of producing the options is governed by complex social processes, it is publicly presented, through an ideological alchemy, as the product of a cognitive process. The reconversion of the social into cognitive confers a superior quality to social processes.

From the point of view of the logic of social processes, the absorption of the cognitive perspective can amount to producing a rupture. The 'natural' logic of social processes can lead to qualitatively low options or even catastrophic through their consequences. Often, the promotion of a better option imposes ruptures in the course of events and the generating of new social forces. An efficient social change presupposes, inevitably, a social process of purification: introducing a cognitive control over social mechanisms in order to ensure social processes of a higher quality.

Chapter 5

The Communality of the Strategies of Transition: The External Actors

The External Actors in the Molding of Transition

Communality

The constitution of the strategy of transition was accomplished through the contribution various actors, internal as well as external. Most definitely, the main directions of the strategy were formulated, within a substantial consensus, by the vast majority of external and internal social and political actors and accepted by the whole community.

The fall of Ceaușescu's regime, on the background of the disaggregation of the socialist system, created in Romania a shock derived from the explosion of opportunities of change. It was clear for everyone that important changes became possible. The will for radical changes existed. A few general directions – integration in the Western world, assimilation of Western models – were accepted by the great mass of the collectivity. Also, there was wide enthusiasm regarding the acceptation/solicitation of Western support and the receptivity towards the strategy/programs offered by the Occident. However, the more specific options, or the steps that were to be taken, were not very

clear-cut. In this new context, the internal actors initiated a process of clarification. But in so what regards the specification of strategic options, it can be estimated that the internal actors had the *dominant role*. It is important, 'for this reason', to start with the aforementioned.

The Occident has adopted from the beginning the central role in the elaboration and adoption of fundamental strategic options. The strategic complex that molded the transition expresses both the logic of achieving the generally accepted global objectives and the objectives/interests/conceptions of the Occident referring to the postcommunist evolution of the world. The active involvement of the occident in the transition of the former socialist European countries substantially reduced the diversity of strategic options from country to country, communality being especially accentuated due to this factor.

The Interest of the Occident

Which were the strategic interests of the Occident in the postcommunist period? The Occident – especially the US, as its leader – was engaged, ever since the end of the Second World War, in a strenuous and tiresome fight against the socialist system. The principle of peaceful co-existence had changed the profile of the relations between the two systems from mutual threatening with an almost inevitable war to more complex forms of competition and reciprocal pressure. The mutual recognition of the two systems, with the avoidance of open forms of immixture in internal business, had become a fundamental principle of the world, ensuring a certain degree of security, but without eliminating the risks. The fall of the socialist system radically changed the profile of international relations, the former communist states opting from the beginning for their integration in the Western world. It was natural for the Occident to be oriented towards an active support of this process.

International polarization, with high costs for both systems, in economic terms as well as in political and social ones, had for the first time the opportunity to be completely overcome. A new stable configuration could not be built but through the *absorption* of the former socialist system into the Western world.

The European Union had a special interest here. The historical opportunity of overcoming the division of Europe and creating a *Great Europe* could not be missed.

The Fear

To this global interest, a collective psychological orientation was added, identifiable especially in the US: a visceral fear towards communism and most poignantly towards Russia. If the former socialist European states had a natural inclination towards the Western world, the risk of their possible evolution towards alternative forms, of Soviet inspiration, could not be overruled as it would have maintained the polarization of the world. Russia and some states from the former Soviet Union still represented a potential pole of political and military polarization. In this context, it is understandable that the Occident was dominated by a behavior oriented towards the 'once and for all liquidation of the defeated adversary' and towards the absorption of the latter into its own structures.

The possible revival, even in a different form, of socialism on the ruin of the old system was a danger that had to be taken seriously into consideration.

In this context, the key-element of the Western policy towards the socialist system is the strong common desire of Western intergration, through the change of the socialist model of social organization into capitalist one of the Western-European type. This change was to be accomplished in a rapid rhythm in order to eliminate the risk of adopting a different path and of redeploying, under one form or the other, the polarization of the world. The fear of the old confrontations, which survived in the political mind of the Occident, appears to have been a decisive factor in the promotion of a *change of rupture*, of a *brutal transition*, sustained by an accentuated direct intervention, not a gradual one, based on the own searching of every state. How justified was this fear is another problem. I believe that, actually, it was completely insignificant. And probably that nor did the Western political actors believe very much in it. It was more likely a 'movement for granting security'.

Another objective must be mentioned: the final destruction of the communist ideology.

On this background, a 'mentorship' style in the relation of the Occident with the countries in transition has developed. Stimulated by the maximal receptivity of the former socialist countries, the first developed a large strategic set of intervention in orienting the processes of change. The profile of the relations among states changed structurally.

The Occidental Institutions Involved in the Elaboration of the Strategy of Transition

Immediately after the Revolution, an activization of most of the Western embassies in Romania was recorded. They multiplied relations with the internal political actors, offered them political, intellectual and moral support, including an economic one. There were ambassadors who, far beyond diplomatic customs, were publicly very active in sustaining rapid change.

Soon, a series of international institutions intervened actively: especially the International Monetary Fond and the World Bank, but also organizations such as UNICEF, International Labor Organization and UNDP. An important role was played here by various European organizations: the European Council, the European Union, groups of political parties. The two international financial institutions, being under the *de facto* authority of the US, utilized the financial resources for the socio-economic orientation of the countries in transition, complementary to strong political conditionality, the cooperation with these institutions constituting an important guaranty in the economic and political relation with the Occident. The countries in transition sign agreements with the international banking institutions whose central element is not so much the financial borrowing at stake, as it is the formulation in a common agreement of the programs of social and economic policy.

The *IMF* was involved in the orientation of global economic-financial policies, with an accent on the macro-financial stabilization and rapid privatization.

The *World Bank* was involved in sustaining structural reforms, in the economic sector, but especially in the social one. The borrowings are doubled by the elaboration, in a common agreement, of programs and the massive infusion of experts: the wages system, the system of social security, education and health.

The *International Labor Organization* was initially involved in sustaining the elaboration of a new legislation of labor. But its involvement diminished rapidly.

The *European Commission* intervened later on, starting with the non-economic areas. It seems that the most important programs were initially addressed to education: the *Tempus* program, for the academic education and, ulteriorly, the access to the European programs *Socrates* and *Leonardo*. Once the initiation of the process of integration into EU was established, the *Commission* became very active in the orientation and monitoring of the whole process of change, not only in the view of adopting the communal *aquis*. The PHARE programs are dedicated to sustaining the reforms in various sectors.

The *Soros Foundation* played a special role in all the countries in transition. Disposing of important financial sources, its own as well as offered by the American government, it sustained, besides the process of democratization and change in the social-cultural sectors, the nongovernmental organizations and political groups with an accentuated anticommunist and pro-occidental orientation.

The *Occidental experts* began to play a more and more important role in the development course of various programs. If in the beginning they were solicited, usually, in the academic environment, with their critical reserves and respect for the independence of decision of the national actors, they were rapidly replaced with practicing specialists from the international institutions, bearers of the point of view of the latter.

The PHARE programs opted especially for an extremely unusual method of support. For the support of the reforms in crucial segments of development, though international auctions, teams of Occidental specialists are selected who, inevitably, came with general solution from their personal experience, often quite limited, or, in the best case, from the experience of their country, with contextual validity. Hired on delimited periods of time and oriented by the logic of punctual profit, these companies of expertise had structural difficulties of integration in the process of institutional construction and development of some ample public programs. If it was presupposed that these companies of expertise have role of consultancy and support for the internal process of institutional construction, actually, they worked more likely autonomous, promoting with an excess of authority their particular points of view, and by far less the internal processes of clarification. In my experience, I have difficulties in pointing out a program of this type that has produced sufficiently good results.

A rapid displacement of accent was produced, from internal institutional development to an institutional development oriented by foreign experts. The internal experts were used in this strategic approach rather from secondary positions, of auxiliary experts.

The *Occidental nongovernmental organizations* and *individual activists* were, also, extremely active during the first period of transition. Their financing was based on a combination of Western public sources and private donations. Many of these organizations provided models of good practice and opportunities of formation for the national specialists. However, some extremist approaches can be identified, idealistically naïve programs that, coming against resistance in their societies, hoped to find in the countries in transition a space of high receptivity. Such missionary acts, not seldom accompanied by paranoid fanaticism, induced in societies in transition, maximally opened to Occidental influence, tensions and confusions with important negative effects on the organic process of evolution.

The external actors had a relatively coherent model to promote into the countries in transition and have done so extremely active. On the background of the high communality, there were also differences among institutions (see IMF, WB, EU), but also among individual actors. Such differences were easier accepted by the Occident because, indifferent of their variety and quality, they availed towards the same path: the changing of the communist structures in the direction of some Western type social organization. The mutual tolerance of Occidental actors created multiple traumas and confusions in the countries in transition.

The strategy of transition could not be configured simply by taking over the Occidental model. The former socialist countries were confronted with change of a very high degree of complexity, with which the Occident had, on its turn, a limited experience. In fact, a large mechanism of processing the Western experience under the form of programs of action was created. In this mechanism, the central place was taken by the great international institutions and Occidental governments. Ulteriorly, after the explicit assumption of the objectives of adherence to NATO and integration in EU, these institutions became important actors in the orientation of the strategy of reform.

The Second Layer of the Strategy of Transition

If the first layer of transition, which we have analyzed in a previous chapter, contains the global direction of change, the second layer contains the strategy of reform in all its components, especially in the crucial sectors of the political and economic body. Being the concentrated product of Occidental institutions, the second layer of the strategy, also, exhibits a high communality.

The Strategy of the Reform of the Economy

In the strategy of global change, the reform of the economy represented the core point. The model of centralized and planned economies proved to be not functional. Besides their low internal efficiency, etatist economies were incapable of coupling to the globalized economy. The promotion of market economy, with its mechanisms and institutions, based on private property, represented the key-element of the strategy. In this direction, the following strategic options were promoted:

- a) *the immediate retreat of the state* from its former functions of planning and control of the economy and its replacement with the mechanisms of market economy: the mechanisms of planning and directing of the economy were

completely eliminated in Romanian during the very first year after the Revolution;

- b) *the rapid and complete introduction of the mechanisms of free market economy*, even if state property was majoritarian: the state property enterprises, transformed into *companies* and *public interest companies*, became free market actors (in 1990). The prices were liberalized in most areas of the economy (1990-1991). The function of the state to develop a policy of re-launch of the economy was replaced with the hope that the market mechanisms will correctly orient economy in the new context and will support its rapid growth. Even the function of the state of leadership and control over the state enterprises was, practically, abandoned, its role being taken over by the mechanisms of free market and by systems of leadership on the model of private enterprises: administration boards etc;
- c) *the total and rapid privatization*: complementary to encouraging the emergence of private enterprises, the total and rapid privatization was established as priority objective;
- d) the rhythm of economic changes: it was considered that the *shock therapy* is the guaranty of a rapid and efficient economic re-launch, as against a *gradual therapy*, stretched on a longer period of time, which was labeled as inefficacious. The metaphorical expression of such a strategic option, very popular among the political actors of the first years of transition, is the one of the cat: 'it is preferable to break the cat in two at once, than to cut gradually, piece by piece';
- e) *the opening of Romanian economy to international commerce*, with as few restrictions as possible: even from the beginning, the various forms of perfectionism were discouraged, considered to represent brakes in the path of healing and re-launching the economy.

This groups of strategic options for the reform of the economy was considered to be beyond any discussion, guaranteed by Western expertise.

The Strategy of Political Reform

- a) In the center of the political reform was the replacement of the communist state, ruled by the Communist Party, with a *multiparty democracy*.
- b) The option for the *accentuated retreat of the state* from the organization and functioning of the society, not only from the economy: an aggressive anti-state ideology was promoted – the state is a poor administrator; it is structurally corrupt and inefficient. If in economy the role of the state must be taken over by market economy, in the social areas it must be in a great measure taken over by the 'civil society' and by the nongovernmental organizations.
- c) The integration of the former socialist countries in the Western political-military systems: separated, as a consequence of the Second World War, from the Occidental society and included against their will into the Soviet system, the East-European countries deemed as an essential objective of change the reintegration into the Euro-Atlantic structures, to whom they considered to rightfully belong. Their European vocation molded the whole strategy of transition. Even from the beginning, a first laxer level of European integration was promoted: all the former

socialist European countries were received in the Council of Europe. Their integration in the superior forms of organization of the Occident followed: NATO and the European Union.

- d) A central principal of political reform was the promotion of the attitude of continuous suspicion against the 'forces of evil' that supposedly had survived the communist regime: the former communists, the former members of *Securitate*. The *actual* fight against communism was placed less at the level of the analysis of the fundamentals of the communist project and more at one of the *punishment* of the persons who had been in important office positions within the former regime. Moreover, a progressive accentuation was produced, that is of the fight against any political force suspected to be the carriers of some programs of communist inspiration or just some possible side-slipping of the communist type: 'reformed communism', 'neo-communism', 'crypto-communism'. Complementary, the Occident offered a massive support for all the parties and persons with a sure 'anticommunist file', regardless of their popular support. At the same time, the discouraging and marginalizing of any political force that could have been suspected of certain side-slipping of the communist type was produced. In this regard, a certain attitude lag can be identified. The mass of the collectivity was tempted to consider communism as being history, something that belongs to the past, a completely obsolete force, which must moreover be forgotten and the attention focused on the construction of the future. The population of Romania had radically parted with the communist past. The attention had begun to be focused on the construction of the future. Under these conditions, a prolongment of the 'war' with communism did not appear to be important, but even counterproductive. Contrary to this state of mind, some Western political actors, to which an internal minoritarian political segment was added, tended to create a real hysteria of anticommunism: the hunt for the former communists and *Securitate* members as being acute political dangers for the process of transition. If the first attitude deemed 'history' as being responsible for everything that communism had signified, the second attitude switched focus on the responsibility of different persons involved in the communist system. Various manners of penalizing the persons connected to communism were advanced in more or less explicit forms. Here also, a lag can be detected. If the great mass of the community was moreover tempted to grant a certain *political and moral amnesty*, considering that guilt, with a few exceptions, must be laid not on persons, but on history, the political forces with anticommunist program promoted as an absolute priority the fight against all those who were involved in one way or the other in the functioning of the communist system.
- e) A policy of clear-cut distancing of the former socialist countries from Russia: in spite of the fact that Russia had firmly entered the path of transition, assimilating the model proposed by the Occident, there was a silent fear that a pole of power might be rebuilt around it. Though its economic and military dimensions, Russia could have become an alternative attraction pole as to the Occident.
- f) The development of a mechanism of strictly applying the recommendations of the international institutions in the national policies: the Council of Europe, IMF, World Bank, ulteriorly the European Commission and the European Parliament –

any orientation that appeared to be insufficiently orthodox as against the program of Occidental integration is severely sanctioned. A large set of disciplinary methods were applied.

- g) *Favoring restorative measures*: transition acquired a salient character of *restoration* (Priboi, 2000). The Occident has strongly sustained the internal political body, marginal as to popular support, interested in promoting a set of claims of restorative type: access to power for historical parties, re-installment of monarchy, *restitutio in integrum* of property. Such an orientation was founded on the following principle: socialism was an aberrant lapse of history that must be completely eliminated, with all its effects/outcomes. It is a lesson for the future: any action of the communist type, such as the nationalization of property, is historically illegal and will be, sooner or later, corrected. Starting from the estimation that the nationalization represented an illegal act, in respect of an abstract universal principle of the right to private property, the restoration of property rights was sustained, without giving heed to the negative socio-economic effects and inequities that it might entail, after such a long period of time. In the Western discourse, the restorative themes are seldom to be found explicitly, but pressures through various channels were continuously exerted. I do not believe that the reasons were of the moral type, rather of the political-pragmatic one: a harsh punishment of the communist revolution
- h) Although Europe had surpassed the extreme forms of neo-liberalism of the Margaret Thatcher and Ronald Regan type, they laid at the foundation of the IMF strategy and, up to a certain measure, at the one of the World Bank, and the countries in transition were handed over to these institutions. I do not believe that the option for the neo-liberalist philosophy must be explained on the one hand through an inertia of ideological models, rather through a clear motivation: it represented the most efficacious mechanism of disciplining the former socialist countries and of casting away the risk of hesitations in the realization of a no-turning-back integration into the Occidental world.
- i) The rapid evolution towards a true dogmatism of change: if immediately after the fall of communist regimes, the central element of the Western attitude was 'the transition from communism to capitalism is a totally new process; no one is an expert in the strategy to be followed', an absolutely new theme was passed on to: 'the international institutions, the Occidental experts know what needs to be done; the option for a sincere and correct strategy of transition can be tested by the unconditional acceptance of this expertise'. Even nowadays, when I write this book, the Dutch minister of finances declared that the signing of a new accord with the IMF that the only way for Romania to prove its credibility. Immediately after the Revolution, the International Monetary Fund became the most important actor in the molding of the economic policy of the country, proving an accentuated rigid and directional attitude. A personal story: in 1990, being the Minister of Labor and Social Protection, I was shocked when I was solicited to give my opinion on a letter of the government to the IMF (*Letter of Intention*). Intoxicated by the maximalist principles of democracy, I could not understand the procedure of its elaboration, not the content itself: the letter was formulated by the IMF and were to adopt it as our own strategy on the short term. The World Bank

was also installed in Romania, assuming a crucial role in the molding of the socio-economic policy, however, much more flexible than the IMF. I have collaborated to many programs organized by the World Bank. My feeling was that this institution was more likely torn between the option for the democratic mechanisms and the imposing of its very own models, closely related to the IMF conception. It is easy to notice that in the attitude of the Occident, the option not for the ensuring of the quality of reforms, but for the rapidity of their introduction and, especially, for the acceptance of the recommendations of Occidental experts dominated.

- j) More difficult to account for was the excessive insistence of the Occident, even from the first years of transition, on the rights of ethnic minorities, although in Romania they were at a level close to the European one. The first negative effect was the *ethnicization* of social relations. With such an insistence, often coupled with the demonization of 'the nationalism of the majoritarian ethnic group', generated supplementary social tensions in the Romanian society already heavy burdened with the difficulties of transition. Such an ideological and political orientation encouraged extremist behaviors from some ethnic groups, complementary with the tendencies of self-denigration of the majoritarian Romanian ethnic group, which generated strong unbalance and distortion in the social relations.
- k) Complementary to the reform of the political system, reforms in all the sectors of the political body were established as priorities, in order to change the conception of communist organization with an Occidental one. Here also, even from the beginning, the approach was the one of the realization of the programs of reform by groups of Western experts, financed on the basis of some borrowings from the World Bank and firmly oriented by the latter or, later on, by finances from the European Union: the reform of the system of social insurances (*The White Charta of Social Insurances*), the reform of the system of social work (*The White Charta of Social Work*), the reform of the system of financing/organizing the sanitary system, the reform of the system of education.

Was the Paradigm of Transition an Inevitable Choice or Were There Alternatives?

At this moment of the analysis, it is useful to formulate a crucial question of the sociology of transition: where there or not alternatives to the adopted strategy of transition?

We can record as an empirical fact that the first part of transition, crucial for its development, was dominated by the belief that the chosen strategy is the only correct one, the imaginable alternatives being labeled as, mainly, inadequate and ideologically classified with harsh epithets from the category of 'remains of the communist mentality'. In a century where the considering of alternatives has become a rule, the hostility towards any exploration of possible alternatives can be regarded as a indicator both of a limited thinking, as well as of a profoundly ideological one, carriers of specific interests.

It has been argued that that *the first layer of the strategy of transition* expresses directly the structural configuration of the actual world: the reintegration of the former communist countries into the globalized capitalist world was the only solution to the crisis of the communist system. We could say that this layer *has no alternatives*. The odds that in Romania, or in a similar area, a project of socio-economic organization different from the Occidental one be born, were practically null. Such a solution would have led to counterproductive isolation. The rapid integration into the structures of the occident was for Eastern Europe the only possible option. China was able to develop its own strategy, but the orientation, on its own path, towards a globally integrated market economy was for it also at the center of its strategic options. The former communist European countries were from the start animated by a common interest: a strong, undivided Europe, with a single socio-economic orientation, founded on an integrated European economy. From this point of view, the action of the Occident to politically and ideologically recuperate the former communist European countries fell on extremely receptive grounds. The brutal manner of imposing socialism in Romania, against the collective will, the traumas inflicted by the Soviet type communism, and later on, by Ceaușescu's type of communism, the failures of the communist program and, especially, the forced separation of Romania from the Western world to whom, traditionally, the collectivity believed to belong to, are solid arguments that sustain the popular adherence to the directions of transition.

Beyond the imperative character of the general direction of change, the strategic options from the second and third layer, we can identify possible alternatives that could have been opted for. On the background of the first structural layer, without alternative, there are alternative strategic alternative options, different from the point fo view of their efficiency.

The second layer of the strategy of transition, to which the fundamental strategic options operated by the Western actors are placed, presents a high communality, a coherent set of strategic options, lacking the opening for a systematic examination of alternatives. The Occident exerted a concerted pressure on the national political options, which made that in the second layer also, practically, a significant opening for the search of alternatives is lacking. By it, the Occident assumed in a large measure the responsibility for the promoted strategic options. The key of the examination of alternatives is not to be found in the countries in transition, but in the occident that had an active and coherent intervention.

The third layer of the strategy of transition contains the differentiations between the countries engaged in transition. If the second layer was dominated by communality, in the third layer, significant differences between countries can be recorded. At this ultimate level, a very complex logic of internal processes can be identified, but which interacts with international processes. The internal factors had relatively reduced degrees of liberty due to the especially active and efficacious orienting intervention of the Occident. The differences between countries are due to the variety of internal conditions, as well as, and even especially, to the geopolitical position. The interaction between internal political actors and the external ones represented a factor likewise important. There was always a dialogue/negotiation between internal and external actors. The result of these interactions

created a complex strategy that combines the fundamental options, highly coordinated, with options that have fluctuated according to the participant actors, but also to the experience accumulated during the process and the stage the transition was at. The internal dynamics of internal actors will be analyzed in the following chapter.

Chapter 6

The Internal actors: the Political Process in the Romanian Society in Transition

An Explicative Hypothesis of the Political Process from the Period of Transition

In explaining the post-revolutionary political process, factors placed at an eventful level are usually invoked: political actions and interactions among the political actors. Such a perspective is important, but it does not provide access to the profound logic of the political process. For the construction of the theory of political processes, it is necessary to exploit three structural levels: *the social structure of the Romanian society in transition* (the socio-economic groups and the relations among them) and *the configuration of the new political class and the process of constitution of the political parties*. To these levels, the interaction of the internal and external social-political factors must be added.

Such a perspective is insufficiently explored in the actual sociology.

Unlike the standard theory, the fundamental thesis of the theory developed here is that ***technocracy, in socialism as well as in the initial period of transition, exhibits the characteristics of a distinct social class; the dynamics of technocracy during the period of transition and the ascribing of the other political forces to it represents the crucial factor in the molding of the political process of this period.***

All the societies in transition have had to solve a *double problem: the generating of a new 'political class' and of a plurality of political parties, cu distinct political and ideological programs.*

The place of the former communist political class has had to be taken by a new political class. It was realized through the constitution of political parties. During the first period of transition, the latter were less the expression of the interests of distinct social groups or the carriers of some sufficiently elaborated political programs and more the formal precondition of the constitution of a multiparty democracy. The difficulties of the constitution of a variety of political parties represent the most important source of the first crises of the political system during the period of transition.

The key of the process of generating political parties in Romania lies in the process of political differentiation of technocracy.

I would formulate ***the central hypothesis*** of the explanation of the political processes from the first phase of transition as such:

The process of passing to the multiparty system will depend on the manner of emergence of the political parties as against the existent technocracy. This process can take place following two paths:

- *the first path: the internal differentiation of technocracy – in this case, transition will take place in a balanced manner, with moderate conflicts; the consensus will be initially relatively high; gradually, without major social and political conflicts, the political system will be differentiated in a multitude of parties, with clear-cut political and ideological programs;*
- *the second path: the new parties are constituted outside technocracy and against it – in this case, the political process will take place in an accentuated conflictory manner and will be marked by important incongruence and superficial ideological polarization.*

In Romania, due to some specific conditions, the generating of political parties took place following the second path.

The Social Structure of the Socialist Society

In the analyses of the social structures of the socialist society, the model produced by the communist ideology predominated, and that, up to a great extent, was uncritically assumed by the Western analysts. Two errors are comprised in this paradigm. The first error is the application to the communist society of the Marxist theory according to which the political parties/groups are a component part of social classes, expressing their interests on the political level. Actually, in the communist societies, the ‘political class’ became itself a distinct social class with interests different from the other social classes. A second error lies in the failure to notice an important social class, with a specific orientation and that, in the communist society, as well as in the period of transition, proved to have a crucial political role: *the intellectuality* and especially *the technocracy*, as part of intellectuality, which occupies a special place due to its position of authority in the socio-economic system of administration.

The Communist political class as a social class. If by *social class* we understand the *totality of actors, with distinct social and economic interests*, the political class from the leadership of the communist society can thus be considered a *social class* in the classic sense of the term. It does not promote, as it happens in the capitalist system, the *pre-constituted socio-economic interests of the other social groups*, being the political and ideological expression of the latter, but it is a class coagulated around a socio-economic and political program from which its position in society, as well as the privileged access to socio-economic resources is entailed. Only fictitiously does it represent, ideologically and politically, the ‘interests of the working class and of the peasantry, of the entire society’. In fact, it had adhered to the Soviet socialist model of social organization, benefiting of a system of economic and social privileges that were promoted through its position of power. This model of political-social organization, founded on a unique political party with leadership role, structurally imposes a homogenous political class both through its ideological and political orientation, and its manner of access to the social and economic benefits and positions.

Such a type of social structuring can be found in the societies characterized by the ‘Asian manner of production’ described by Marx.

The members of the communist political class are the product of a strictly political process of selection by the group in power, on political criteria, and not socio-economic ones. Once entered in the political system, they usually become members for life of the political class. Common to the members of this class is the adherence to the principles of the communist ideology. They are career politicians, 'professional activists', as they were called in the communist political idiom. If for the positions of leadership from the various sectors of social life (directors of institutions, specialists) the selection was made more on criteria of technical competence, doubled by the political ones, the leadership in the political system was the result of a long process of selection, during a distinct political career. The internal differentiation of the communist political class was generated by the position occupied in the political system.

The communist political class exhibits a specific historical dynamics. In all the European socialist countries, the leading communist group, which assumed power after the war, was composed of professionalized activists, the 'illegalists', most of them being initially selected by the Soviet communist party. The instating of communist hugely enlarged the communist political class, but the nucleus that operated the selection of new members, holding the monopoly of political power, was the initial one. The political professionalization was accentuated, separating itself more and more clearly from the segment of technical leadership of the society. As a result of this process, the leading political class was always limited as dimensions. Although the Communist Party from Romania comprised a huge number of members, actually, it did not form a political class. The political class itself was reduced the political leaders and the group of employees of the political apparatus. The sustenance of the regime was ensured more likely by the international forces of the socialist system subordinated to the Soviet Union and, in subsidiary, by the internal political forces. The latter could not have been, on the long term, strong enough outside the mechanisms of international conservation of the communist system.

Structurally limited in dimensions, the Romanian communist political class has suffered in the last decades a progressive process of shrinking and isolation. This process was determined by the combination of two factors: the increasingly profound crisis of the communist system and the personal dictatorship of the Ceaușescu family. Except the persons adopted into the circle of the Ceaușescu family, the ones that in fact held power, more and more persons that occupied even important political positions within the party and the state were transformed into mere executants of the authoritarian policy elaborated at the top of the party hierarchy, progressively becoming unsatisfied with the system. But on the other hand, the members of the group could not detach themselves from the logic of the communist system and thus suffering the risk of losing the privileged positions. A process of political and ideological depletion of the political class has started to be prefigured as an effect of the crisis of the whole system, accentuated by the loss of historical perspective.

Beside the very members of the communist political class, the persons interested in politics were characterized more and more by a highly consensual negative attitude towards the communist regime, however lacking a political program. Even those that sympathized initially with the system, the economic and political crisis of the latter were pushed on adverse positions. Characteristic to the political attitude of the immense

majority of the population was *the passivism*. The attempts to organize and take political action were paralyzed by the brutal repression, but also by the lack of international perspectives of change. The evolution of the Romanian society was determined less by internal factors but rather by the international configuration: the international communist network at the center of which there was the Soviet Union and the relation between it and the Occidental powers. The profound uncertainty regarding the future evolution of the world made social actors to more likely spectators, lacking any perspective. And therefore it was even less expected that from among them any differentiation of somewhat articulate political programs be prefigured.

The workers and *the peasants* were defined by the communist ideology as being the leading political force of the regime. With the exception of the first years after the instating of communism, when this ideological illusion had certain grounds, the workers and the peasants were rapidly stripped of any power, being controlled by an oppressive political system, as well as by the class of technocrats, who in the mean time had conquered key-positions in the economic, administrative and social-cultural system. The workers could express their discontent only through violent riots, snuffed out through different means of control, including force. Complementary, the communist power, out of ideological and political reasons of maintaining a certain social balance, if it did not offer power in the leading of the society to the mass of workers and peasants, it tried to ensure a large set of social benefits: unlimited access to work places, a high level of wages as against other incomes, close to the one of the technocracy, not relying on harsh measures of disciplining in the work area, their decorative inclusion into different forms of social-political representation.

The *intellectuality/technocracy* – intellectuality is composed of two great groups: *technocracy* – the ones occupy technical positions of leadership of the whole social, economic and administrative system – and *intellectuality* itself, the specialists who act on the basis of a high set of knowledge – people of science, engineers, projectors, doctors, professors, mass-media specialists, literates, artists. The two groups had in common the scientific and technical competence as the ultimate resource of their socio-economic position. The technocracy had privileged access to the socio-economic resources due to its leading position in the economic and administrative system. The intellectuality also, even if it did not occupy leading positions, enjoyed a high social status, although with a limited access to economic resources. It was natural that the two groups develop a stand of reciprocal support, and solidarity in the promotion of the values of science and technology.

Using the classic scheme of the social classes overshadowed the position and distinct role of the intellectuality/technocracy in the socialist society. In spite of its ideology, the communist regime transformed technocracy into a distinct social class, increasingly strong and with its own socio-economic interests and political orientations, different from the communist political class, of party activists.

The political ideology of the technocracy was built on a value nucleus composed of modernization in the Occidental style, technical and intellectual performances, social power based on knowledge and the position in the administration of the whole socio-economic system. It promotes mainly the three fundamental values of modernity:

scientific, technical and administrative *competence*, characteristic to any modern technocracy, scientific, technical and administrative *consensus* and internal *solidarity*. *Meritocracy* represented a central dimension of its ideology. In so what regards the model of society, the technocracy did not have a clear perspective, oscillating between the capitalist occident and a socialism based on technical rationality, intellectual values and a democracy that would free technocracy from the constraints of the communist political system. But the most unclear component of this ideological complex was *the form of property*. It did not represent for technocracy the most important element. A stet property, in the context of a society ruled in a technocratic manner, was acceptable.

With the directions of change, of the socialist societies that fundamentally depended on the global changes, being unpredictable, it was only natural that they did not succeed in crystallizing their own political view. Within technocracy, strong aspirations of social change of the communist system were developed, but without holding a proper political orientation characterized by articulate political programs.

The technocracy within the socialist system has a different position from the one in the capitalist system. It was controlled by the political system, but often having a substantial power in the technical decisions of functioning of the social system.

In spite of the extremely authoritarian character of communism, the Romanian society ha developed a large variety of forms of modern organization, although politically distorted. The competence of specialists has always represented a vital resource of the modernization of society and, during the last part of the communist regime, also a resource of administration of the technical-administrative complex under the conditions of rapidly accentuating crisis. The class of technocracy had gathered competence, had developed technical, scientific and cultural values more and more hostile to the communist ideology, and had created networks with a certain degree of cohesion. It tended to build a nonpolitical institutional system of managing the society. Through its leading position on the sectorial level, as well as due to its competence in the various areas of social life, it had gradually obtained a key social position, combined with social and cultural prestige.

The relations between technocracy/intellectuality and the political class had an asymmetric configuration. The political class, being vitally interested in the maintenance of the socio-economic system of the communist type, which ensured it with a privileged role, promoted from the beginning technocracy that became more and more important in a society with an increasing complexity. Technocracy was structurally interested in the promotion of a system where it would have the leading positions, liberating itself from political power. Artisans of a modern system, in many points similar to the existent one in the Western countries, the Romanian technocrats exhibited an orientation distinct from the one of the political class, and even increasingly opposed to it. They constantly constituted the forces that promoted the reform of communism. The *autonomous-rendering* of the component sectors of the Romanian society was accentuated as against the global policy. The priority of technical values, specific to each sector became an important source of resistance of the technical body against the political body.

Never has the communist regime in Romania succeeded in obtaining a political loyalty from the technocracy. Beyond subordination at a global level of the technical body to the political body, the differences and tensions became more and more salient, at the level of ideological options, as well as at the one of practical action. As the social organization

grew in complexity, complementary to the deepening of the crisis of socialism, technocracy became, as mentality, more and more independent from the communist policy and ideology, reaching up to varied forms of hostility.

If the political body firmly controlled the major decisions of social life, on its turn, the technocracy developed a growing control on the political class and on the political system. Its representatives have breached up to political positions, most of them maintaining the technocratic orientation. On its turn, the political system was forced to assimilate a part of the values of technocracy in order to be able to administer an increasingly complex society, but deepened in a profound crisis. Inevitably, in order to ensure the functioning of the system, the politicians were forced by the logic of things to assimilate technocrats in leading positions on criteria of competence, rather than on political ones. The more and more aberrant policy of the leading body has clarified the anticommunist options. Especially in the '80s, the hostility of the technocracy against the communist is constantly growing. A tendency of distancing from the communist regime was more and more manifested even within the political system, including within the repressive system: army, militia and even *Securitate*.

A special relation was constituted between technocracy, on the one hand, and the working class and the peasantry, on the other. After the instating of the communist regime, the leading role of 'the working class and the peasantry', ideologically asserted as the key of the new social structure, was actually taken over, in the sphere of the political body, by party activists, and in the sphere of administration, by the technocracy. By virtue of its position of competence and leadership in all the social spheres, the technocracy/intellectuality enjoyed a considerable social prestige. It also held control over the mass of employees.

The Social Structure in the Period of Transition

The Revolution 1989 rapidly changed the configuration of the social structure. New classes and social groups emerged. The existent social classes in the former society acquire a new ideological and political orientation. The entire collectivity was drawn out of the passive and uncertain expectation.

The communist political class, characterized by relatively reduced dimensions, practically disappeared at the same time with the Communist Party. Ceaușescu's totalitarianism, which had accentuated in the '80s the economic, political and moral crisis of the communist regime, had produced a massive lack of popularity of the communist option and mass hostility against the former communist leaders. The violence of the Revolution did nothing but accentuate even more the massive political detachment from the communist perspective. In the historical context of the fall of the entire communist system, the small segment of the former communist leaders has completely lost the chance of participating to the political activity. Unlike the other former socialist countries, where the communist parties have continued their activity, even if under visibly modified ideological forms, the Romanian Communist Party has disappeared, at the same time with the fall of Ceaușescu's regime, as if it had never existed. The elimination of the Communist Party produced an almost eradication from the political life of the small segment of persons with communist political options. Confronted with a

massively hostile attitude, the sporadic attempts of some small groups of the former communist nomenclature did not succeed in re-launching the party. Many of them retired or became prosperous businessmen or well-paid specialist in the new areas of activity, such as, for instance, some private universities. The economic and social success in the new context generated rapid ideological reorientations in this group also. It is not surprising that the members of the former political class have rapidly recycled. They were rapidly launched in the exploitation of the new opportunities of the capitalist type, finding them infinitely more attractive than the ones offered by the former regime.

The technocracy took the place of the former communist political class in the system of political leadership of the entire society. The leadership of the economy, still state property, was liberated from the communist political factor, falling under the exclusive responsibility of the technocracy.

The working class was manifested especially through the rapid development of a strong labor union movement. The labor unions have created a new balance of power within the enterprises, trying to represent a counter-movement to the increasing power of the technocracy and the destructive effects of privatization. From a political point of view, they were convergent with the technocracy in what regards the directions of change of the Romanian society, but focusing on the interests of the wage earners. Solidarity with the management from the state enterprises was coagulated on the objective of maintaining the enterprises and obtaining the financial support from the state with the view of re-launching them in the new economic context. But what this new alliance could not accomplish was to create efficient productive systems. Lacking a strong control from the state in its quality of owner, the management used the state industrial units as source of personal income, many times without any connection to the economic performance. The internal resources of enterprises, to which the resources granted from the state budget for the support of the economy were added, were exploited by the managers together with the employees, distributed function of the balance of power between the two groups.

Through their very position, the labor unions could not step in as actors in the political system proper, but have obtained an important position of political power.

The workers represented the segment that lost the most in the process of transition. The restructuring of the economy, objective which they were persuaded for by the very logic of change, which they have supported with all their heart, proved for them to be a real 'social massacre': massive job dismissals (almost half of the workers of 1990 have disappeared from the wages system), the substantial reduction of wages income, the specter of unemployment that became a major source of anxiety. The deindustrialization eliminated especially the qualified positions from industrial units, in favor of the poorly qualified. The symbolic power, by no means real, that communism has granted to the working class has disappeared without a trace, being replaced by the tacit accusation that this class seems more likely to brake the reform.

The peasantry was engaged in the confuse and frustrating process of taking over the property of the land. The result was an extremely fragmented proprietorship, complementary to the lack of equipment and capital, thus generating an agriculture of

subsistence. Further more, the growth in unemployment has severely reduced the opportunities of the rural population to migrate towards the city and industry.

The business people did not exist, practically, at the beginning of the process of transition, but this social group was rapidly constituted, as the private enterprises were constituted, or as the state ones were taken over. They have rapidly accumulated wealth, by contrast to the impoverishing of the majority. Many of its members are more and more interested in political implication under different form.

The Constitution of the New Political Class

At the same time with the Revolution, political action became an emergency. The potential political actors, inhibited by the blockage of the communist system, suddenly found a political field characterized by a quasi-total freedom.

The Revolution did not find ideologically and politically prepared groups that would become the active actors in the construction of a new system. This happened in all the communist countries due to the unpredictability of the swift fall of the communist system.

In the new political field, two groups with distinct political perspectives became active: the technocracy, which occupied the key-leading-positions in the whole society, and the anticommunist political groups. The only ones that in the last period of communism had become politically active in a distinct manner were isolated persons and much reduced groups: the dissidents. In Romania, this segment was very small and, consequently, little significant. The combination repression/tolerance conferred to the anticommunist forces a fragmentary character and a rather marginalized one. If any attempt of organization was brutally repressed, presenting the risk of endangering the communist system, the isolated protests tended to be relatively tolerated. The groups composed of the members of the former political parties, dissolved by communist at the end of the '40s, proved to be better organized, becoming the most active political factor and, paradoxically, pushing into a secondary plan the dissident movements proper.

The Political Activization of Technocracy

After the Revolution, the only class that held power, being well organized on the basis of functional relation, but also on a spirit of solidarity, was the technocracy. The Revolution set it free from under the control of the Communist Party, granting it an almost total power over the organization and leadership of the society.

Few changes took place within technocracy: those that had been too active in the communist political system or politically imposed were marginalized. The rapid growth in 1990 of the number of highly qualified work places in the new economic enterprises, but also within the political system, administration, education and health attracted especially the youths in the new technocratic structures.

At the basis of the large consensus developed in the process of the Revolution was especially the consensus of technocracy, founded on the values of modern development, liberty and democracy, on the adoption of the Occidental model of society, including European integration. Such a program, not defined in detail, but only in its general lines,

was shared by the great mass of the population. Beyond any doubt, characteristic to the technocracy was the option for the reform of the existent system. Socialism had created a society of the modern type that needed to be reformed, by eliminating the deformations induced by communism, but also by development. The program of technocracy was centered on *reform through change and development*.

The consensus over change into a non-communist direction oriented the ideological option of technocracy towards the future construction and much less towards the fight with a communist past that, for it, was no longer significant. Technocracy was the great reservoir of the future political class. It represented a strong social class not only from a technical point of view, but also a social position, with the capacity and the will to engage in the construction of the new socio-economic system. It was to be expected that the formation of the new political class would be produced on the basis of technocracy. Its ability of political differentiation, through the passing from the initial consensus to the development of a plurality of directions and strategies of change, proved to be very slow as against the pressures of the respective period of time.

The managerial technocracy from the state enterprises suffered an extremely difficult process of recycling. The managers of these enterprises entered a confused situation with more alternative solutions:

- a) the managers of the state enterprises had a double interest: on the one hand, the elimination of the control of the state from the leadership of the enterprises, on the other hand, the strong economic support from the state in the view of overcoming the economic problems that the enterprises confronted with and for their re-launch. The illusion that the liberation of the economy from political control will grant it the possibility of a rapid developed petered out fast. The post-revolutionary economic crisis made the positions of enterprises extremely vulnerable. The managers-specialists from the still state enterprises soon found themselves in a structure of interests contrary to their own profession: the maximization of personal earnings through a ruining leadership of the enterprises. A new coalition was constituted. The exploitation of the resources of enterprises and of the support offered by the state became a tempting path for the technocracy. For this, it tried to construct a new coalition with the workers, reserving, of course, the king's part. The period of directors-heroes of the state enterprises disappeared without a trace in transition;
- b) the privatization of economy, although accepted as part of the Occidental model and as possibility of economic re-launch through the infusion of capital, was not necessarily the central element of the policy of technocracy. The chances of participation to the privatization were reduced due to their lack of financial resources – and even more for the investments that were so necessary. Few of the managers of the state enterprises succeeded in becoming the owners of the great enterprises. They were no 'strategic investors';
- c) obtaining some leading positions as managers-specialist in the new privatized enterprises: this happened frequently, but at the end of a long process of agony of the enterprises and negotiations with the future owners.

Political People from the Parties Dissolved by the Communist Regime

Reappeared on the political stage, the members of the parties dissolved after the war represented a surprise-factor. Few expected that these little groups would have a chance to rebuild the former parties, and to make them sufficiently attractive for the population. Their public image was dominated by a few characteristics: elderly people, practically unknown to the public, with the merit of having endured the excruciating communist prisons after which they were forced to live at the margin of society, without opportunities of development for the necessary abilities in order to seek employment in the different levels of leadership of a society radically different from the past one, rather dominated by desires of retribution against those that had caused them so much suffering: oriented, inevitably, more towards the values of the past than the ones of the future.

What offered them a distinct merit was their systematically anticommunist orientation. Such a merit was not very impressive for the technocracy or for the great mass of the population. They were all anticommunist. For the technocracy, but also for the great majority of the population, communism was a bad dream that they had freed themselves of, and it was not a political obsession with which they must fight ceaselessly. The crucial political problems of the technocracy referred to the construction of the future and less to the judging of the past. The groups remained from the parties dissolved by communism came with a political program completely different from the one of the technocracy: only a radical anticommunist attitude, focused on the exclusion from the political body of all those that had been connected in one way or the other to communism, complementary to the elimination of all the inherited structures. If in the country such a program was marginal, in the Occident, due to some particular circumstances, it gained a very high credibility, important political and financial resources being invested in its support. The Occident had another perspective and other priorities than the majority of internal actors. The latter, originating in their majority from technocracy, gave priority to the solving of the multiple crises of the Romanian society and the development on the lineaments of the Western model. In contrast, the Occident paid a reduced attention to the problems of economic re-launch and the reconstruction of the post-communist society, being preponderantly interested in the definitizing of the fight against the communist enemy. Whereas, the most solid guaranty that the communist system will be completely and forever eliminated was the support of the political groups with radical anticommunist programs. If in the interior anticommunism no longer had any central meaning, for many Occidental actors the 'burning with the branding iron' of any remnant of communism was the priority objective. The technocracy, concentrated in its great majority in a single political party, did not present for the Occident sufficient enough credibility for the completion of such a task. Not because it had pro-communist temptation, but simply because it was interested in a political program of the punitive type. An anticommunist program, placed in the center of attention, did not present attractiveness for the technocracy or for the great mass of the population. The majority of the internal actors focused their attention on pragmatic measures of administrating the socio-economic system in a difficult transition. Moreover, the technocracy felt to be representing a continuous target for accusations of having been solidary with the communist regime.

The strong support of the Occident offered to the anticommunist political groups was an important factor of growth of the attractiveness of the groups from the former political

parties. Especially the segment that could not find a place in the technocratic conglomerate was attracted by the historical parties.

The Segment of Intellectuals Engaged in Producing the Ideology of Transition

In the communist regime, the intellectuality tried to save itself from the pressure of the communist policy and ideology by orienting towards the sectorial values of their domains of activity. After the Revolution, a strong orientation of the intellectual field was produced towards the exploration of the directions of reconstruction and development of the Romanian society. The first temptation was the one of building a consensus around the objective of exploring the possibilities and directions of change, through a collective dialogue. Gradually, the place of this consensus was taken by another: adopting the Occidental model and expertise.

Segments of the intellectuality were engaged in distinct manners in the elaboration of the new ideology of transition.

The political class, composed of members of the new political parties, of the government and parliament, of the central and local public authority, but also of the leaders of the new labor unions and civic organizations, was, by its very position, an active contributor to the construction of the strategy of transition and of the institutions.

The technocrats – the specialists engaged in the system of public and private institutions – have oscillated between the utilization of their technical knowledge from their sphere of activity and their participation to the construction of the global institutional system. Many technocrats entered the political system and contributed to the articulation of the ideology of transition.

The specialists from the academic environment (university didactic body, scientific researchers) have tried to contribute to the producing of the necessary knowledge for the construction of the social frames of the new society, for the elaboration of programs of social development. Some became politically engaged, others maintained a politically neutral position. Some of the members of this category were absorbed in the process of ideological and institutional construction developed by the Occident, not seldom experimenting a feeling of frustrating regarding the instating of a new scientific and ideological authority that uses them in auxiliary positions.

The intellectuality involved in the producing and broadcasting of public messages that promote the ideology of the new project of social change: on the one hand, into this category fall *the political and economic analysts*, as a rule, formed in the Occident, who promote the explicative-justifying discourse of the program of transition. Receiving intellectual support, sometimes even a financial one, from the Occidental actors, the mass-media experienced an explosion in the period of transition, becoming a crucial ground in the promotion of change.

The programmatically anticommunist and morally radical intellectuality: a relatively small group of intellectuals, but with large media coverage, most of whom of a philosophic-essayist orientation, have opted for the promotion of a radical ideology, founded on a combination of violent anticommunism, cultural and moral elitism, promotion of cultural-moral changes in the spirit of some idealized Occidental models, critique of the political formations suspected of lack of firmness in the promotion of the reforms of transition of even ‘neo-communist’ attitude.

Moral elitism, combined with the lack of the necessary knowledge for the engagement in a complex social construct, generated a state of aggressive frustration, expressed under the form of an ideological program composed of the most heterogeneous extremist themes: obsessive anticommunism, climaxing in the ridiculous hunt for former Securitate members, elitist blaming of the mass, considered to be backward, uncritical support for the historical parties, option for monarchy, regardless of its lack of popularity, anti-Romanian stands, support for some Magyar nationalist extremisms – and all on the background of a visceral attitude of rejecting positive sciences, especially the social ones, and of technocrats.

Politically speaking, this group opted for a program of intellectual-political construction not within a party, but assuming the position of representative of *the civil society, yet without consulting the latter*. Beyond the pretension of hovering in a politically and morally superior perspective than the civil society, this group massively promoted the point of view of right wing political formations.

The radical intellectual group received even from the start a substantial financial and political support from the Occident, as an instrument of diffusion of an accentuated anticommunist ideology and of supervision of the political process in order to avoid the possible side-slips from the line considered to be correct. It is the case, for instance, of the *Group for Social Dialogue*. This group was an extremely active critic of the governments between 1990 and 1996 and a supporter of CDR⁹ for the winning of the 1996 elections. The failure of the CDR government created a profound confusion in the program of ‘civic’ formations, marginalizing their political-ideological options. Their message, strongly ideological and moralist, but deficient from a constructive point of view, signals to be entering a phase of exhaustion.

The ‘Revolutionaries’ as a Social Group

The motor and very visible factor of the Revolution was the unorganized mob that occupied the street, placing the communist regime in the impossibility of surviving through a repression. The event was not produced by any organized group, but by a heterogeneous mass of people, many of them young and even children, animated by a collective sentiment of refusal to cope anymore with the communist regime. We can assume that ‘anyway the regime was about to fall’. This is beyond any doubt, but the moral beauty of the popular revolt and of the most active participants cannot be, in any case, doubted.

What happened to the ‘beautiful idealists’ of the Revolution from the 17th-22nd of December? Most of them returned to their normal life with the feeling that they have

⁹ The political coalition that governed between 1997-2000; the Democratic Convention of Romania (CDR in Romanian).

obtained the so long expected victory, often not without the disappointments produced by the post-revolutionary confusion. A part of them, seeing in the social changes an opportunity of socio-economic promotion, entered the political life. Some of them were successfully integrated, others did not survive the competition that was not only based on enthusiasm and courage, being gradually 'sent home'. But what about those that had nowhere to go back to? Confronted with the perspective of returning to their marginal positions, they tried to organize, but these organizations did not succeed in turning into political factors, failing in the claim for some recompenses and privileges, in their quality of 'revolutionaries'. The new political power lead by the technocracy tried to rid itself from their embarrassing presence through various rewards. The newly-appeared historical parties were equally incommoded by the presence of 'revolutionaries'. For them, they represented an alien body and could not be labeled as 'communist' adversaries. For this reasons, the historical parties also subscribed to the anesthetization of the 'revolutionaries' through recompenses and privileges. All the political forces were inclined to use the scattered groups of 'revolutionaries' as mass of maneuver in the street, but they were not interested in accepting them in their political structures. The post-revolutionary political fight excluded from the political life the 'revolutionaries' in a manner that was dishonoring for the latter.

Maybe the most demoralizing fact was the snuffing out of the groups of still active revolutionaries by a mass of profiteers who obtained abusive titles of 'revolutionaries'. A new political class of 'revolutionaries', oriented exclusively towards the obtaining of privileges, was constituted at the margin of the political system.

The Genesis of Political Institutions in Romania

The First Problem of the New Democracy: How to Produce Political Parties?

In the first days after the fall of the communist regime, there was no vision on the manner in which the democratic mechanism would be constituted. The only contoured and unanimously accepted idea was that of *elections* as instrument of producing the legitimate political institutions. However it was clear how the elections would look like in the conditions where there were no political parties. The occidental model of democracy was based on multiparty-ism, alternative mechanisms being out of the question anywhere in world. Therefore, before the organization of elections, it was necessary to solve the problem of generating some political parties.

In the conditions where the fall of the communist system was an unexpected complex event, the constitution in a short period time of some ideologically diversified political parties was for all the former socialist countries a particularly difficult matter. Fro Romania, due to some completely specific conditions, it was an especially critical one.

The first free elections were programmed five months after the Revolution: in May 1990. But the question was who will be the actors that will present themselves at these elections. Is it possible, in such a short period of time, for *at least two sufficiently significant parties, which would participate in the first elections, to be produced?* In order to confer credibility to the elections and solidity to the democratic process, it was very important for the new parties to be sufficiently balanced from the point of view of the support of the electorate.

Three possible solutions can be identified to the problem of democratic elections under the circumstances of the total lack of political parties, each with different political and social consequences:

- a) *Anticommunist parties rapidly formed in opposition to the communist party that survived the fall of the communist regime.* With the exception of Romania, in all the former communist countries the communist parties have survived, trying to redefine themselves in the new historical context. Under these conditions, the anticommunist forces were motivated to rapidly constitute in one or more anticommunist political parties, entering into competition with the former party. Ulteriorly, the former communist parties structurally modified their political options under the pressures of social-political changes, in the new international context, evolving towards forms of the European type of left wing, or disappearing in time.

Romania was not characterized by such a path. The disappearance of the Communist Party created a strange void in the political process; there was no stimulant for the apparition of one or more political parties that would coagulate the public attitudes around a distinct anticommunist program. On the contrary, the disappearance of the Communist Party produced a growth of solidarity and the constitution of a strong collective consensus against communism and for a profound change of the Romanian society in the direction of the Western model. But secondary, this consensus proved to represent a major difficulty in the rapid constitution of a plurality of political parties.

- b) *Political ideologies/parties after the Occidental model.* The constitution of some classic political parties after the example of the Occident – social-democratic, socialist, liberal, Christian-democratic, ecologist – represented a simple solution of rapid political differentiation. The adoption of such a model had a minor advantage: the Occidental models offered a scheme of undisputable differentiation, in time the new parties being able to develop programs adequate to transition proper.

Such a solution was used by all the all post-communist European countries. Nevertheless, there was an important impediment here too. How can the actors of the new political class pass in just four months from the anticommunist solidarity to the affiliation to a multitude of parties, whose programmatic differentiation was not at all clear in the context of the beginning of transition? Especially technocracy, the most important source of the new political class, was characterized by a high degree of solidarity, being difficult for it to rapidly distribute into different political parties that did not have sufficiently differentiated messages. Rather the marginal political formations vis-à-vis the technocracy could have been able to rapidly form such parties. So it came to be that the mass of technocracy could not rapidly differentiate into distinct political parties, remaining relatively homogenous and confuse, yet confronting a plurality of marginal parties that could not attract a sufficient electoral support.

There were three major problems to the formation of a differentiated system of political parties, according to the Occidental classification. Firstly, it was practically impossible for distinct political and ideological programs to be crystallized and to be made known for the formation of a contoured public image.

Secondly, the parties constituted at a national level were, inevitably, to be confronted with the production in a short period of time of an absolutely necessary local support. The solidarity of the technocracy, especially at a local level, was a supplementary hindrance for its rapid political differentiation. It could only produce such a differentiation in time. A third problem refers to the competition among the different groups for the adoption of the title of an authoritative Occidental party. In Romanian there were situations when the process was blocked in a plurality of parties that declared to be pertaining to the same Occidental political family. The ecologist parties are an example.

- c) *Elections, in the first round, centered not on parties, but on persons, thus gaining time for the development of the new parties.* The urgency of the first elections did not necessarily impose the vote for parties, but more the creation of some institutions based on the mechanisms of representative democracy: firstly, the parliament that should produce the new legislation, especially the Constitution, and to vote for a government that would administer the country up to the adoption of a new Constitution and the organization of new elections on a clearer political basis. The first elections could take place in a uninominal manner, although this was, especially at a national level, quite difficult, if not impossible. Such a vote could have conserved the existent political situation: a global, undifferentiated consensus that was to be at the root of the adoption of the new Constitution and the basic laws for a democratic system. And, actually, in Romania, the adoption of the new legislation, although the conflictory state among parties was accentuated, was made, usually, on the basis of a high consensus. Probably, at the elections, the representatives of technocracy would have dominantly participated, persons with a certain prestige in the community of specialists and in the local or national one, who did not necessarily have a clear political orientation. The chose parliament would not have had a distinct political orientation, but it would have represented the frame of crystallization of the new system of political parties for the proper election after the adoption of the Constitution. Such a possibility would have been especially adequate for Romania, although it is not at all clear how such a process would have been accomplished.

The Constitution of Political Structures in Romania

In Romania, the constitution of the political system took place on a different path than the three great models aforementioned, due to some particularities that generated an extremely tense political dynamics, with powerful effects on the long term.

The Constitution of the National Salvation Front (NSF)

Due to the disappearance of the Communist Party as a result of the Revolution, the *National Salvation Front* was constituted as a political organism that, in the conditions of the 'void of power', was to ensure the provisory government, the rapid promotion of some legislative changes, the preparation of the elections. Expressing the point of view of the technocracy, it promoted a large provisory consensus focused on the largely accepted objective of eliminating the communist structures and to putting forward profound

changes in the entire society. NSF was not conceived as a political party that would enter in ulterior competition with other parties, but it was to cease its activity after the constitution of the normal political structures of the country, that is until the first legislative elections. CPUN stemmed from the NSF, a national organism of decision, whose function was to promote the legislative and socio-economic changes until the institution legitimated by elections would be able to take over these functions.

The manner in which the passing from NSF to the multiparty system was to take place was unclear. My estimation is that many leaders from NSF did not consider to be an emergency the constitution of some political parties until the elections of May 1990, but did not exclude it either, due to the rules of the new political system that everyone had accepted without any reserves.

A government was constituted, comprised of personalities that had suddenly appeared after the Revolution. The structures of public administration were rebuilt, the technocracy representing the basis of the new organization.

The Emergence of the Political Parties: the Effects of the Temporal Un-phasing

The disappearance of the Communist Party made the process of emergence of the parties to be slower and generator of important tensions and conflicts, due to the differences of perspective in the construction of the political system.

The technocracy had a priority interest the changes that were to take place and for the control of which, due to its key position in the administration of the whole society, it did not require an organization under the form of a political party. For this reason, it was not prepared for nor interested in the immediate constitution under the form of a political party. A political structure of the NSF type, founded on a large consensus and that offered to the technocracy the dominant role, was very convenient to it.

In contrast with this orientation of the technocracy, other political groups became from the beginning vitally interested in constituting themselves into political parties, which, for them, represented the only way of obtaining access to power. Immediately after the Revolution, a multitude of parties appeared, which represented rather marginal political forces in comparison with the technocracy. The most important were the *historical parties: the National-Peasant Party, the Liberal Party, and the Social-Democrat Party*. The historical parties, existent from before the instating of the communist regime and dissolved by the latter, were immediately re-installed in January 1990. To the historical parties, a multitude of 'pocket parties' were added, produced by adventurers of naïve enthusiasts who threw themselves into the political field animated by the illusions generated by the explosion of political opportunities. However, these parties had small chances of success as against the historical parties.

The rapid explosion of a large number of parties, but especially the one of historical parties, represented a completely unexpected phenomenon not only for the technocracy, but also for the entire population. A *political unbalance* resulted from this situation, which would produce multiple consequences. The mass of technocrats, which had an effective power in the administration of society, enjoying, for this reason, a certain trust from the population, did not hurry in constructing new parties. The constitution of the new parties, not within technocracy, but outside it only succeeded in producing a deep gap between the two political blocks: on the one hand, the block of the technocrats,

characterized by a certain diffuse internal solidarity, but holding control over state power, confronted with internal difficulties in producing differentiated political structures; on the other hand, the multitude of newly-constituted parties that did not have access to the strings of state power or popular support for that matter. The technocracy suddenly found itself in a frustrating situation. The political field structured on the division of Occidental type – liberal, Christian-democrat, social-democrat –, which, potentially, could offer the basis for the political differentiation of the technocracy, was rapidly occupied by historical parties. These parties were almost instantly received into the Occidental political families, which consolidated their international legitimacy. Thus, the technocracy found itself without a legitimate political territory for development. The fact that the historical parties occupied, with a certain historical legitimacy, these political territories was to increase the confusion of the technocracy and to slow down even more its process of political differentiation. A major political unbalance resulted: on the one hand, a multitude of parties lacking a significant social support, and on the other hand, a large mass of the technocrats in a slower process of political orientation. The members of the technocratic mass were thus even less tempted to orient themselves towards the newly-constituted parties, which did not present for them the necessary credibility and not even a welcoming political space.

Being the radically anticommunist political force, asserting a much more ethical program, yet politically confuse, the historical parties attracted, inevitably, an important number of morally frustrated elderly people, but also from the young generation, especially intellectuals, confused by the events that followed the Revolution. The abstract aspiration of this category, which contravened the pragmatic approach of the technocracy, made them more likely attracted by the radical ideological programs of the historical parties.

The Emergence of Political Parties: the Problem of Consensus

The diversification of political life in a plurality of parties, from the beginning, came against ***the principle of consensus***, which represented a central component of the ideology of technocracy, strongly sustained by the great majority of the collectivity. The attitude towards consensus was the determining factor of the adopted path for political diversification. The principle of consensus had, in that context, a double signification. On the one hand, it described *a state of fact*: the general accord on the global direction of change was not troubled by sufficiently crystallized differentiations on the concrete paths to be taken. On the other hand, it expressed a model of political evolution that seems to have been considered by Ion Iliescu, a sort of organic democracy, based on dialogue, not on social confrontations. Within the consensus on the general direction, there could have been differences of opinion that did not express, actually, structurally distinct ideological and political options.

The technocracy was from the beginning inclined towards the inclusion of consensus as an important topic in its political agenda. For many members of the technocracy, the differentiation into parties appeared as inevitable, yet the mechanisms of accomplishing such a differentiation were unclear. Therefore, the ideology of the technocracy included the principle of consensus and of the postponement of political differentiations. This political differentiation was to take, initially, the form of the differences of ideas, these being able to develop, through a gradual process, difficult to predict, into differences of

political and ideological programs. The crystallization of a multiparty democracy was extremely difficult not because of the deficit of the culture of democracy, but due to the lack of the mechanism to produce political differentiation.

The taking over by the Occident of the role to produce the strategy of transition and to guide its implementation had as effect the consolidation of consensus, making the differentiation into parties lose much of its significance. Paradoxically, the parties did not appear out of the need to express different interests and political programs, but rather in order to give meaning to the mechanism of multiparty democracy.

The historical parties had a totally different perspective on the principle of consensus. At the time, the attitude of denouncement by the historical parties of the principle of consensus as expressing a 'neo-communist idea' was shocking. These have not intuited the fact that the acceptance of a cognitive type of process of debating the paths of transition did not favor them for many reasons. Firstly, on this ground they could not compete with the technocracy, the latter being much more prepared. Secondly, probably the most important reason, because the acceptance of the path of debates within a consensus, made the immediate emergence of a multitude of parties necessary, the power remaining in the hands of the technocracy. Whereas, the most important trump of the historical parties was the claiming of political power by contesting the technocracy on anticommunist grounds, which was incompatible with the principle of consensus. As such, the historical parties chose the *path of rupture*: They constituted themselves into political parties, claiming political power not on the basis of a clear program of change and of a competence in accomplishing it, but on an abstract legitimacy. The rejection of technocracy was not made through the opposition of some sufficiently elaborated solutions of change, but through the casting of a block accusation on the latter, of having a communist mentality. This context was the generator of the irreconcilable positions of the political forces from the first stage of transition: if the technocracy promoted the principle of consensus, inviting the development of political dialogue on the grounds of the predominantly cognitive-technical analysis of the strategy of transition, the historical parties pushed the political process on the field defined, on the one hand, by the claim of a legitimacy of historical tradition combined with the one of an anticommunism beyond any suspicion, and on the other hand, by the block accusation of the technocracy as having a 'crypto-communist' political orientation.

It is no wonder that the technocracy, which formed in the first days after the Revolution almost exclusively the new political class, was shocked by the emergence of some political parties founded by marginal persons from its point of view. The multiparty-ism became thus, even from the beginning of January 1990, a fact that generated a political unbalance. For the mass of the collectivity, especially for the technocracy, it was difficult to accept political formations that fueled themselves from a distant past and that had no solutions for the present or any technical competences in the administration of a complex modern society. For the technocracy, the fact that the new political leaders wanted to enter the fight for power with means that the former structurally rejected was unacceptable – political accusations against the specialists formed by the communist society. The style of political fight of the technocracy was focused on a combination of technical qualification and internal solidarity. The construction of the future was considered to be the competence of the technocrats. The pre-communist distant past, with the entire experience that it engendered, was considered to be irrelevant for the

construction of a modern society. The large majority of the technocrats had not been the victims of the great injustices committed by the communist regime, especially in its first years: the nationalization of property, political condemnations. And even the agricultural terrains taken over by the co-operative farms from their parents did not represent an economically interesting source for the technocrats. And nor did they feel responsible for these communist acts.

The greatest part of the population gave its trust to the technocracy. It provided guaranties of competence and it was oriented towards the development of the country, towards a responsible approach of collective wellbeing. The re-launch of the Romanian society was to be achieved through a vast institutional reconstruction, the technocrats being perceived as the only specialists in this regard.

Yet unexpectedly, there was a first fight between two principles of organization of the democratic political process. The popular anticommunist aspiration inclined from the beginning towards the principle of *consensual democracy*: the political method of identifying the directions of development was supposed to be the one of public debates, founded on the existence of a large consensus, using science and expertise as essential sources. The objective was to be the adoption of major political decision through a process of consensual-rendering, in the spirit of the common national interest. Opposed to this principle was the one of *conflictory democracy, based on confrontations between the parties supposed to have irreconcilable programs*. In this perspective, the consensually-oriented public debates had no sense in the political process. Multiparty-ism could only be achieved by the accentuation of the fight among parties in order to obtain power. It was not even taken into consideration that the political decision could be taken through dialogue, but only through political fight. The adoption of the occidental model of the multiparty democracy, with a decision-making mechanism based on electoral competition and with the authority conferred by the electorate, was, obviously, the only practical option. Not only is the economy globalized, but also the multiparty structure, being engulfed in all the international value structures and institutions.

However, in Western Europe the multiparty system is for some decades now more and more complemented with mechanisms of social dialogue and of creating consensus through complex processes based on the principle of partnership. The variant of democracy promoted in the first years of transition was a primitive simplification of a single mechanism: the fight among parties. In fact, even the Occident itself continuously promoted the development of some mechanisms of consensual-rendering through dialogue with the social partners. The result was a paradox. If, for example, during the first period, the government formed out of technocrats tried to develop the social dialogue and to build a social partnership, the parties of opposition were inclined to accuse the promotion of partnership as being more likely a method of manipulation. Democracy in that period, and even today, is characterized by a structural difficulty of engaging the political opposition in a process of social partnership.

The support of multiparty-ism, besides representing a first step towards the construction of a political system of the Occidental type, seems to have had a special contextual signification. The adoption of a multiparty system seemed to represent a solid safety measure against the risk of maintaining a single party, which could have blocked the system changes.

The Transformation of NSF into a Political Party

At the end of January 1990, Ion Iliescu declares, in a troublesome meeting, the transformation of NSF into a political party that was to take part in the elections. Such a decision stirred bitter protests, representing a transgression of the principle on which NSF had been built, namely that it represented a structure not politically engaged, whose mission was the preparation of the elections. Yet it is clear that the rapid emergence of a multitude of parties that could not receive a large popular support placed NSF in difficult position. A large part of the technocracy and the population had adhered to its philosophy. A problem appeared thus. On the one hand, NSF, not being a political party, although having a large support from the masses, could not participate in the elections that were to follow. On the other hand, the multitude of parties, lacking any significant support, could artificially benefit of votes in the elections, being the only ones legally accepted in this process. NSF – and with the largest part of technocracy – underwent the risk of being swept aside from power through elections, by the newly-formed parties. The transformation of NSF into a party, even if it was perceived as morally incorrect, was the only possibility for a large mass of social and political actors to be represented in the elections, as they did not feel that the already constituted parties represented them. The constitution of political parties withdrew from NSF many persons with a different orientation than the one of the technocrats, producing an increase in its political homogeneity. On the other hand, NSF risked keeping captive in its own structure many political forces that were not at all tempted to integrate themselves in the already formed parties. It is however probable that the formation of a new party from the forces that supported NSF, but outside it, respecting thus its philosophy of un-engagement, would have led to a similar result.

The Historical Parties

The Emergence of the New Historical Parties

Specific to Romania is that the standard parties, of the European type, were not formed as new parties by the groups coming from the political class in the process of crystallization, having a strong technocratic basis. On the contrary, they represented a reconstitution of the parties dissolved by the communist regime by their former members. It is explainable why these parties appeared for the public opinion not as new, modern parties, the result of the political crystallization within the mass of the community, but as ‘historical parties’.

How can such exceptionality be accounted for? The explanation suggested here lays stress on the lag of estimation of the urgency of formation of the political parties by the mass of technocracy and the former members of the parties dissolved by the communist regime. The disappearance of the main political adversary, the *Communist Party*, and the large political consensus generated by this fact created a complex of circumstances that did not urge upon the need of political differentiation. The only strongly cohesive groups, animated by the will of transforming immediately into parties, were formed out of the survivors of historical parties. Their rapid consolidation, on the basis of a strong international support, only inhibited, on its turn, even more the constitution of some

alternative parties. The reinstating of the former parties had as effect the creation of a sort of monopoly over the structures of the European type of party, the technocracy being excluded or at least pushed into a marginal position. This fact was full of consequences on the entire political process.

The Founders and Members of the New Historical Parties

The historical parties were revived by small groups of their former members, who developed a quasi-absolute internal authority. The deficit of internal democracy resulted from this constitutive mechanism that severely lessened the attractiveness for the younger persons with experience in the administration of the modern society, especially for those lacking any historical relation with the former political groups. Young people also joined in the new historical parties, but usually more those coming from families with tradition of belonging to these parties and hence, frequently, had to suffer for that. Also, as it happened in periods of revolution, marginal persons adhered, attracted by the ideological radicalism promoted by these parties. Due to their gerontocratic structure, there was the tendency that the new-comers adopt radical attitudes, in order to be accepted and to pass the test of not having communist-type of mentalities.

A special attraction for the historical parties had some segments of the intellectuality. The intellectuals that gravitated towards these parties were part, most of the time, of the technocracy itself, but of other areas of intellectuality: literates, essayists, journalists, philosophers. Most of them were anticommunist intellectuals, marginalized by the former regime. To these, young people massively sustained by grants were added. Not involved in the proper functioning of economy and administration, unsatisfied with the evolution of the Romanian society under the communist regime, as well after the Revolution, it is understandable that some intellectuals should have evolved towards a radical ideology, verging on the historical parties.

The Ideology of Historical Parties

The historical parties had a distinct profile. Likewise the politicians coming from the technocracy and affiliated to other parties, they subscribed to the strategic principles of transition, but with certain particularity: *political radicalism*. At the center of their ideological orientation there were several options: *restoration, change through destruction, mythology of reform, anticommunism, sanctioning of the persons involved with the former regime*.

Restoration: the return to the socio-economic and political structures from before the communism, without a clear vision of the process of change in what concerns Romania, but also the world in its entirety, represented the central element of the political program of the historical parties. The clear expressed objective was to regain control over the former political and economic position that had been lost. At a political level, the historical parties have reclaimed even from the beginning the hold, as a legitimate right, over the position of political leadership dissolved by the communism 40 years before: the retrocedence *in integrum* of nationalized property. Beyond the restitution *in integrum* of property and the elimination from political life of all those suspected of communist

mentalities, they had an unclear image of the instating of a society of the Occidental type, being devoid of a more or less articulated strategy of the process of transformation. The lack of a program of change was counterbalanced by the belief that their initial experience guarantees the competence to accomplish the necessary change, once power is seized.

The option for change through the destruction of the modern structures produced by communism, vis-à-vis the alternative of *their change through correction and development to the level to Occidental modernity*: the political program of the historical parties was centered not on constructive issues, but on those destructive in an accentuated manner – the block exclusion of institutional accumulation since the '40s, through rapid reforms; the political contestation of the competence of the specialists that were the authors of all that was produced in the socialist society. In addition, there was the obsession of the rapid reform through the promotion of immediate changes in all the spheres of social life, although based on insufficiently articulated programs, being the effect of distinct strategy: the destruction of the inherited structures, for, in the emptied place, a capitalist-type of society to be built instead, devoid of any risk of returning to communism.

The mythology of reform: the theme of *reform* offered content to the vague political program of historical parties, especially once they were in governing position. In this variant, it presupposed the abandonment of everything that had been inherited and the adoption of any change that seemed to be pertaining to the type of the Occidental models. In sustaining the capacity of historical parties to promote a correct reform, the confiscation of the support of the Occident was resorted to.

The theme of reform represented the main instrument of critique of the technocratic political formation: 'lack of reform', 'blocked reform', 'delayed reform' even 'altered reform'. The government of 1997 ambitiously rushed into the promotion of reforms in all areas, from economy to education and health, but soon these proved to be rather improvisations. The program of swift privatization, un-oriented by an economic strategy, as a means of getting rid of an institutional system that it failed to understand, represents a typical example.

A new dogmatism of change appeared. Any idea of change, sustained with the suggestion that is an emulation of the experience of the Occident, represents 'The Reform'. Any act of questioning of a program of reform was labeled as expressing a communist mentality. Any invitation to meditation was equivalent to the suspicion against an intention of blocking the change. A central component of this orientation was the acceptance of any program coming from the Occident. Up to a certain measure, the technocrats tended to feel less comfortable regarding the tendency of the Occident to assume the complete authority over the conception of changes.

The general direction of reforms being accepted by all the political forces, the sole theme that distinguished the two groups was the *rapidity of reforms* and *their quality*. The historical parties were inclined towards the rapid adoption of changes, regardless of their quality, as being the best strategy. The radicalism of changes was opposed to the technocratic orientation, which laid stress of the less spectacular technical change, but more organic.

The elections of 1996 had at the center of debates precisely this very issue. The central point of DCR (the Democratic Convention of Romania, CDR in Romanian), the acceleration of reforms, failed more in insufficiently thought over changes, blocked, in the end, by failures and internal conflicts. The political will of change of the political parties was not accompanied by the necessary technical competence. It is illustrative the promise of DCR to come to government with 15,000 specialists, which proved to be more a bitter jest.

The ideological radicalism of the historical parties was not the effect of a coherent political program, but the product of two factors: the lack of experience in the political management of a complex modern society and the low level of popularity. The radicalism represented the only instrument that the historical parties had in the competition with the technocracy, which was not inclined towards changes at all costs, even destructive ones.

The programmatic anticommunism, to which the fight against the former (actual?) 'members of Securitate' was added ulteriorly, did not represent a reaction to the correct estimation of the real danger of a communist revival, but, firstly, the main weapon of the historical parties, used in the political fight against technocracy, which had obtained power after the Revolution, a means of putting the latter 'in the corner'. Due to Ceaușescu's policy, almost the whole active generation of specialists was forced to enter the party. From this point of view, the whole technocracy could be conveniently accused of having been communist, responsible of this negative historical experiment and the carrier of a communist mentality. The technocracy was presented as the former nomenclature that had 'stolen/confiscated the Revolution', its access to power having to be blocked. The historical parties sustained the transformation into law of the famous point 7 of the 'Declaration of Timișoara', according to which it was forbidden to the former communists the access to leading positions in the new state.

The anticommunist radicalism represented a competitive advantage. Alongside the past of the technocracy, debatable from an ideological point of view, the lack of appetite for violent anticommunist attitudes accentuated its vulnerable point. Not considering themselves responsible for the crimes of the former regime or 'infected' by communist ideology, 'the former communist technocrats' felt threatened by the anticommunist radicalism of the historical parties.

The historical parties succeeded in a large measure to maintain in the political attention the fight against the communists and members of Securitate, grounds where they were the strongest in what concerns the legitimacy.

Accentuating the placement at the center of its policy the anticommunist strategy, they have obtained another advantage: the political support of the Occident. A part of the vote obtained in 1996 was due to the promise of support from the Occident of the historical parties.

The indifference towards the social problems: regarding the complex social problems inherited from the communist regime and amplified in the period of transition, the historical parties seemed to be indifferent, focusing with priority on conquering political power, reinstating of monarchy, retroceding of nationalized property. Their political program was centered on the presupposition that, once these objectives are accomplished, the Romanian society will recover by itself. Moreover, a social policy was regarded as

representing a brake in the path of transition, the manifestation of a populist communist mentality.

The historical parties staked, in order to obtain the popular support, not on an accentuated social policy, but on totally different topics: on the naïve promise of a reform that, with the massive support of the Occident, will rapidly readjust the economic situation of the country; on the anticommunist radicalism and on the critique of SDPR (the Social-Democrat Party of Romania, PDSR in Romanian) as being a communist-type pf party in what concerns the mentality.

The Relation between the Historical Parties and the Technocracy

From the beginning, between the two political blocks there was a conflictory situation.

The members of the former political parties have rapidly organized, from a political point of view, but being increasingly frustrated by the fact that, after the fall of the communist regime, although they have gained the liberty of political organization, they have not obtained, in fact, the access to power that would have suited their expectations. They considered themselves not only the victims of the communist regime, but also the only steady fighters against communism, the lawful representatives of real democracy and capitalism. It was to be expected that, under these condition, the leaders of historical parties develop an even violent attitude regarding the mass of technocrats, accused of being the product of communism, still keeping the former away from power. The technocrats, in their great majority former members of the Communist Party, were considered by he historical political parties to be responsible for the communist regime and, inevitably, to have *communist mentalities*. Paradoxically, many of the members from the second echelon of the historical parties had also been members of the Communist Party.

The strong pressure of the historical parties generated within the rest of the political powers, especially the technocracy, a defensive increase of internal consensus, fact which substantially slowed down their process of political differentiation. Continuously accused as being neo-communist/comprised of former Securitate members, the technocracy, which perceived itself as being the main competent actor of social transformation, evolved towards the construction of a party that would defend and represent it.

Between the technocracy and the historical parties there were profound differences not so much in what regards *the future*, but rather the manner in which the separation from *the past* must be operated. In so what regards the strategy of transition, the differences were not of substance, but rather of form, priorities and programs of change. The historical parties claimed to have monopoly over the political competence, while the technocracy counted on its technical competence. The technocrats were oriented towards the modernization in the Occidental style of the socio-economic systems built by the socialist regime, while the historical parties considered the systems in question to be the products of communism, and that, from a principle-centered point of view, they did not trust and had the tendency to destroy. The historical parties promoted a punitive approach regarding those that in past had been in one measure or the other involved in leading positions in the communist system, whereas the technocracy stressed, in the name of a responsibility of history rather than persons, a consensus in what concerns social development. For the historical parties, the objective of consensual-rendering was even

dangerous, the access to power not being able to be achieved but through the clear-cut delimitation from technocracy.

The political polarization on the historic-technocratic line was also accentuated by the procedures of selection of leadership. In order to defend the political advantage of being the inheritors of pre-communist democracy and to have been consistently anticommunist, the leaders of historical parties developed a closed protective system. The groups that held the ultimate, uncontested authority were composed of elders coming from the traditional parties; a second criterion of exclusion, subordinated to the first, was the origin from the families of the former members of these parties. Such practices of admission were completely different from the norms that regulated the relations of competition within technocracy. Instead of a high mobility, the historical parties introduced a rigid system of authority, which, as a principle, excluded the access of technocrats. As a consequence, the historical parties appeared to the technocracy as being closed political structures, to which they could not freely gain access to, with equal chances. The technocrats felt rather rejected by the historical parties – or accepted, but into a second hand category of members.

Due to the distrust of the historical parties for the technocracy, they were systematically devoid of the necessary resources of specialists in the functioning of the economy and administration. In 1996, at the elections, DCR felt the need of answering to the fear of population that it had no specialists, i.e. technocrats, by putting forward that it held a important resource of specialists.

The producing of a political image of the polarization between ‘the true capitalism’, ‘the true democracy’ and ‘neo/crypto-communism’ can be explained, in conclusion, not though the existence of a real difference between these lineaments, but as effect of the unbalance between the political forces: on the one hand, a large and diffuse group, composed mainly of technocrats, sustained by a large part of the population, frightened by the political extremism and radicalism, and, on the other hand, by a group of historical parties, with a reduced popularity, lacking an articulate program of change of the Romanian society, focused on the objective of reinstating a past social order, massively sustained by Occidental political forces.

The Public Image of Historical Parties

The historical parties came with a few trumps that made them particularly credible, more in the Occident than in the country. The public opinion had from the beginning serious reserves regarding the historical parties. After more than 40 years after the dissolution of their parties, few of the former leaders had survived, due to old age, or to extermination in the communist prisons. Marginalized, they were not part of the technocracy constituted in the communist period. Yet they were, after the fall of communism, the only persons that had valid past of explicitly anticommunist political activity, however distant in the past. On the other hand, these politicians were, practically, unknown to the collectivity, which did not trust their political capacity. The experience of the former politicians who, at the time very young, had gone before the instating of communism through a period itself confuse from the point of view of the democratic structures – the dictatorship of

Carol II¹⁰, the one of Antonescu¹¹, the war, the Soviet occupation – did not represent a voucher beyond doubt. The lack of political experience from the last 40 years had transformed their initial capacity more into nostalgic frustrations. The long periods in prisons, followed by marginal positions in the socialist society or in the Occident, did not provide a sufficient frame for political development. As such, the historical parties did not enjoy even in the points of maximal crisis of the SDPR a high enough social support. At the beginning of transition, for the young and adult generation, these parties were mere history, lacking the relevance for the future of the Romanian society. By contrast, the leaders of historical parties claimed to have an authority conferred by history and by the consistently anticommunist stand, and not by the competence acquired during their lifetime and the support of the collectivity.

The Occident had regarding the newly re-installed historical parties a totally different position than the one of the internal community. Thus, the credibility of historical parties came less from the political experience proper or from the popular support and more from the anticommunist attitude beyond doubt. The historical parties offered the guaranty of an intransigent anticommunist polity, much more definite than the diffuse group of the technocracy. Investing an absolute trust in the historical parties, the Occident developed a structural suspicion regarding the other political forces, opposed to the former, especially the strongest of all – NSF/SDPR.

It is likely that such a support was accentuated by the unbalance of power. The reduced popularity of the historical parties as against the power of the parties that came from the technocracy (the elections of 1992 brought to power four parties that represented, in a way, the technocracy, infamously labeled by the ideological supporters of the historical parties as the ‘red quadrilateral’) represented a serious factor of anxiety for the Occident. On the other hand, the historical parties, counting on the support of the Occident, have accentuated the opposition vis-à-vis the technocratic-based parties, refusing all possible cooperation with them. Therefore, after the failure at the elections of 1990 and 1992, the Occident exerted at the 1996 elections a strong political pressure for the ‘alternation to power’, not due to the quality and power of the opposition, but as a ‘supreme test of democracy’. Such an argument clearly represented an instrument of forcing the victory in the elections of the historical parties.

The failure of the 1997-2000 government amplified the initial weaknesses of these parties. The elections proved the incapacity of the historical parties to govern, through their simplistic program as well as through the low political and technical competence. The elections of 2000 brought back SDPR to power, whose name had been meanwhile changed to SDP (the Social Democrat Party, PSD in Romanian), as a party dominated by the technocracy, the opposition coming from the elections much more weaker than was before.

The Historical Parties and the Workers and the Peasants

The ideology of historical parties was not favored by the working class or the peasants. The large mass of the population was interested in the re-launch of the economy, the retrocedence of the property to the former proprietors not representing a priority of any

¹⁰ King of Romania during 1930-1940.

¹¹ Marshal, PM during 1940-1944, lead Romania into the anti-Soviet war.

kind to it. The same thing was valid especially regarding the re-assignment of property for the houses nationalized by the communist regime. It is true that, in this last problem, a larger segment of the population was interested. Most of the urban population, especially the one coming from the rural area, had nothing to gain from such a objective, established as a priority by the historical parties, on the contrary, they could become the innocent victims of this type of justice.

The workers were tied to the industry. Their ultimate objective was not privatization. Practically, they never had the feeling of owners of the economy. To whom the industrial unit belonged to, what not important. What was really important for them was for the economy to work, to offer work places and decent wages. As such, the interest of the workers was centered on the *management of enterprises*. In exchange, the historical parties were more interested in the matter of the retrocedence of the *property of enterprises*. The workers trusted the technocracy, into which they placed all their hopes. The eventual former proprietors (actually, the nationalized enterprises no longer existed for a long time now) were regarded by the workers as being devoid of any legitimacy and, in addition, were feared for their deficit of competence and resources. The workers were interested in a privatization that would re-launch the enterprises, yet being frightened by the privatization that ruined them.

The peasants had become proprietor of the land, but lacked the technical and financial resources. The programs of the historical parties contained no solution to the great mass of peasants, besides the retrocedence that, in a great measure, had already been accomplished.

An Unexpected Effect of the Emergence of Historical Parties: The International Isolation of Romania

The historical parties were perceived by the Occident as presenting the only guaranty of the anticommunist and pro-Occidental attitude. Consequently, they were strongly sustained by the Occident with the view of consolidating the changes considered to be essential for the orientation of the new international climate, despite their deficit of social support. Complementary, the Occident joined their fight against the political segments that formed the majority. Indirectly, the accepting of historical parties in the international political groups blocked for a long period of time the acceptance of the parties on technocratic basis.

NSF/SDPR

The technocracy constituted the spinal column of NSF and ulteriorly, of DSP. It represented a solid political force, connected to the state as an essential instrument of transition and, for its most part, to the administration of the economy, including its privatization.

NSF, with its ulterior changes, SDPR and SDP, was always the strongest party, even when it was in the opposition. Its force was given by a large social support, offered by heterogeneous social groups, with different motivations. The technocracy supported this political formation as a negative reaction to the exclusivistic and antagonistic policy of historical parties. These did not attract the technocracy because of their option to

subordinate the specialists to the politicians from the old parties, but also because of their unclear program towards the state system where the technocracy occupied positions of authority. The workers and the peasants, who intuited the fact that they will become the victims of transition, hoped that the only source of social support will come from the technocrats, the historical parties tending to diffusely treat the privileged ones from the former regime.

Sustained by a large sector from the working and peasant class, on its turn confused and feeling threatened by the danger of the extremism of the historical parties, the party that massively represented the technocracy (NSF/SDPR) won in a categorical manner the elections of 1990 and 1992, in the competition with the historical parties. It is not by mere chance that NSF/SDPR have become allies, together with parties representing segments of the technocracy, but also with forces threatened by the punitive political radicalism of the historical parties: NUPR (the National Union Party of Romania, PUNR in Romanian), the Socialist Party, GRP (Great Romania Party, PRM in Romanian) that, along its ethnic-oriented ideology, manifested a hostile attitude towards the historical parties.

NSF/SDPR did not have a very clear socio-economic program, counting more on its proved competence in the administration of a complex socio-economic system. It is true that during a very short period of time the followed the Revolution (February-April 1990) a program-direction was drafted, accepted by the great majority of the population and especially by the technocracy: the transition to the market economy and democracy, on the background of a strong orientation towards the Occident. While no one thought about a return to communism, the suspicion against the presence of a strong communist mentality, obsessively forwarded by the historical parties, was to continuously create a serious political confusion.

It is difficult to evaluate, beyond the ideological disputes, the strategy of reform from the first period. Yet it is obvious that the economic strategy of the technocracy, being in governing position between 1990-1996 – but, paradoxically, up to a certain measure, even after – was responsible of errors and confusions. The political crisis of the technocracy stemmed, on the one hand, from its incapacity to identify a strategy of reform that would ensure a transition without economic fall. Up to a certain measure, the extremist errors of NSF/SDPR were also caused by the pressure of historical parties.

Initially, the only ideology of NSF/SDPR was the one of administering the state and the inherited economic system into a process of controlled change. It was not a left wing party proper, in the classic sense of the word, i.e. representing the interests of the great mass of salaried people, pensioners, peasants, the poor etc. It represented, firstly, the elite of state administration, but not the one interested in maintaining the communist state system. Although it occupied key-positions within this system, it was subordinated to the aberrant communist policy, and did not have access to attractive sources of income. The technocratic elite was vitally interested in a capitalist system that would offer it not only social prestige, but also satisfactory income sources, more specifically, access to property and positions of managers/specialists in the private economy. The critical problem of the technocrats was the one of transition from the state economy to private economy, in order for them to transmute their social-economic positions. It was natural for the technocracy to oscillate between the interests of the managers of the state enterprises and a privatization controlled by them, whence they would maximize their benefits. Under no

circumstances did the technocracy exhibit any propensity towards the ideology of a state that would control the economy and the society. The competence in the administration of the economy and society offered it the opportunity of a controlled administration of change, thus being able to promote its own interests. Such a competence made the technocracy to be oriented not towards destructive shock-measures of change, but towards the transformation of the existent systems from within, in a controlled manner. Initially, certain reluctant attitudes towards privatization can be identified, in the conditions where technocracy did not hold the necessary financial resources for the taking over of enterprises. The control over the managers was prolonged in form much more beneficial for them (mandating, for instance), which offered the possibility of accumulation of capital, although though the destruction up to a great extent of the state property. It is the foremost case of tourism. The doubts related to the chances of maintaining some enterprises through privatization motivated a certain reluctance as to their privatization.

It is likewise explainable that there was an alliance between the technocracy and the labor unions, but not out of ideological reasons of the communist type, but rather due to pragmatic reasons. The technocracy who administered the state enterprises as well as the salaried people were interested in maintaining the enterprises, as state property or as privatized units, including in the obtaining of the support of the state for the sustenance of enterprises in difficulty.

The new political party was far from representing the spirit of social-democracy. Also under the communist regime, the mass of the technocracy was responsible for the administration of economy, and not for the social policy, which it regarded more as a typical component of the communist policy. In the long crisis of the socialist economy, the technocracy was interested in the salvaging of the economy, namely though the massive input of resources in its areas of crisis. The social policy from the last part of the Romanian communist regime was more and more amputated in order to save the economy. The technocracy, more likely interested in the sustenance of the economy, was tempted to ignore the accumulating social problems. During the last decades, the competition between the economic policy and the social policy had become accentuated: Ceaușescu's communist regime granted an absolute priority to the economy, only marginally trying to maintain a social balance in order to avoid the possible social upturns. It is not by chance that, during the last years of communism, the social programs were financed at the lowest level in comparison to the other socialist countries. After the Revolution, although many corrections were operated in the social policy, its financial support continued to be at a visibly lower level than the other countries in transition (Zamfir, 1993, 1999). I would say that NSF/SDPR was much more interested in the *protection of enterprises* and much less in *social protection*.

It is true that, being interested in obtaining a mass support, this party was forced to pay a certain attention to social programs, but a relatively modest one.

The analysis of the utilization of budgetary resources offers an accurate image of the political orientation of NSF/SDPR in the period that it held power. In no moment of transition did the public expenses go with priority to the social area, but to the support of the economy. They were lower as a percent from GDP than in all the other countries in transition. The financial support for the impoverished social segments was systematically neglected. The most efficient method of support, the welfare aids for the children, was

degraded in 2-3 years from about 10% of the medium wages in 1990 to 3-4%. Although in 1991-1993 there was an explosion of poverty, the governments were very little interested in the introduction of a system of welfare for those that were confronted with a severe poverty. The system of welfare was introduced only in 1995, more due to the pressure of the World Bank than to solid political beliefs. Because of the lack of political sustenance, this welfare was accepted in such a manner that it rapidly deteriorated, disappearing completely in a few years. The financing of education and health systems, severely limited in the last period of the communist regime, although it did grow up to a certain measure in the first years of transition, was maintained at very low levels, comparatively to all the other countries in transition. The only social programs that enjoyed a more important support were those oriented towards the salariat: the retired (the former salaried people) and the unemployed (the dismissed people). The argument of the technocracy for the under-financing of the social issues was, paradoxically, of a liberal nature: the restructuring of the economy needs significant financial resources; only the support of the economy can produce an increase in the collective well-being; the reform cannot be accomplished but through sacrifices.

SDPR was not, as it labeled itself, a left wing party, of the social-democrat type. It was a party of the technocracy, especially the one from the sector of economy and administration, which was profoundly associated with the state. The economic technocracy had from the beginning a very important role. If in the socialist system, the economic technocracy was placed in the subordination of the political body, after the Revolution it took over the state function of leadership over the economy, confronting with powerful phenomena of disaggregation and crisis. Its main problem was the administration of the economic system in order to re-launch it through reform. In reality, it was inevitable for the economy, during the period of transition, to be again subordinated to the political ruling: the economic policy, negotiated with the international institutions, was a determining factor in the management of enterprises.

The technocracy was receptive to the point of view of the labor unions: the policy of maintaining the work places. The union movement, very strong in Romania, was an important factor of pressure for the maintaining of the work places. However, I do not believe that this was the key element. Actually, an alliance was formed between the economic technocracy and the unions, with an excessive focus on the maintaining of the existent enterprises, on the background of a chronic lack of a clear strategy of economic re-launch. The massive support of the state economy simultaneously satisfied the interests of the technocracy and of the salariat.

In fact, the somewhat confuse policy of support of the economy, in addition to the wasting of public resources, was not able to stop economic fall, but rather to stretch it on a longer period of time, with excessive costs. Instead of using the limited available resources for the infrastructure, as a priority, and the sustenance of some strategic directions of the economy, complementary to the social support of the collectivity confronted with an explosion of poverty and the rapid degradation of social services, they were wastefully injected into un-restructured enterprises, confusedly and damagingly administered. If the privatization of the economy was accepted without any reserves, under the conditions of a limited offer, the economic technocracy has obsessively tried, in the new confuse economic context, to maintain the inherited industrial system. It was to be expected that the technocracy connected to the state economy would not accept a

privatization through the destruction of the economic system that, nonetheless, it administered. The process of economic destruction took place through a painful evolution, with huge budgetary inputs in the support of the economy. However, the ideology of the technocracy was oriented, beyond any doubt, by the program of constructing a capitalist society of the Occidental type. The representatives of the management of state enterprises, who occupied influential positions within the politically active technocracy, strongly promoted the logic of economic changes, the errors of strategy being the main factor for the negative consequences. But on the other hand, the economic technocracy was protected by the inverse errors of radicalism that, during 1997-2000, was devastating for the Romanian economy. From this point of view, the orientation of the technocracy was somewhat opposed to the radicalism of the historical parties. Representing the technocracy, SDPR adopted a pragmatic logic of change, trying to promote a more organic reform. Coming to power in 1997, the historical parties proved that they had no strategy of reform, besides the damaging doctrine of 'privatization at all costs' and 'reform by all means'. In reality, they did not have the capacity of reforming the economy and the society, as they had promised.

The orientation towards social-democracy of SDPR was gradually crystallized more likely due to external factors. Firstly, the fact that the historical parties occupied from the beginning the right wing of the political continuum inevitably pushed towards the assuming of SDPR of a more left wing position. Should this factor not have been present, it can be presupposed that SDPR would have been inclined more towards the right wing. The continuous labeling of SDPR by the historical parties as being not only a left wing party, but even a communist one contributed, probably, to the latter's self-identification with social-democracy. Secondly, the technocracy, through its option for the mechanisms of the state as an instrument of transition, had no liberal inclinations. Finally, in the fight with the historical parties that ignored the social issue, SDPR was oriented towards the obtaining of a large support from the population, which could not be realized without paying a certain attention to social matters. It is interesting that the scission of NSF into the two wings – Iliescu/Roman – has conserved in both parties that social-democrat orientation. The new DP (Democrat Party, PD in Romanian) led by Roman, despite the fact that during the period of government was more attached to an accentuated liberal political program, registered into the socialist international, but it gave a more declarative importance rather than a decisive one to social problems. The actual propensity towards NLP (the National Liberal Party, PNL in Romanian) is to accentuate its liberal orientation.

At the same time, the technocracy was perceived to be the administrator of the whole society, not just the economy, fact that, from a political point of view, pushed it towards the left wing.

The Political Representation of Ethnic Groups

The Revolution placed into a new context the interethnic relations. From a political point of view, the minority ethnic groups of Romania can be classified into three categories. The small ethnic groups – Germans, Jews, Ukrainians, Serbs, Bulgarians, Slovaks, Czechs, Italians, Armenians, Turks, Tartars – were not subjected to a discriminating treatment under the communist regime either. There was even a policy of cultural

support, although, by comparison to European standards, maybe not sufficiently accentuated. After the Revolution, they received financial support for the development of cultural activities and even parliamentary representativeness in the group of 'ethnic minorities besides the Magyar one'. A second category, actually, the most numerous one, is the Roma population. The problems of this group had as priority the socio-economic ones – the social marginalization consolidated in a long history – and only afterwards cultural-ethnic problems proper. The policy of socio-economic support was from the beginning the most important one. Secondary, the formation of some own political parties offered large opportunities of inclusion to the Roma group in the new political class. Finally, the third single category – the Magyars – was strongly represented from a political point of view.

Within the same political family, of technocratic extraction, after the Revolution immediately appeared two parties that had a strong ethnic side: DUMR (the Democrat Union of the Magyars from Romania, UDMR in Romanian) and NUPR (the National Union Party of Romania, PUNR in Romanian).

DUMR

DUMR appeared as a cultural organization, transformed into a political party for the promotion of the not only cultural interests, but also the political one of the Magyars. In comparison to all the other ethnic groups, the Magyars represent a completely different situation. With a proportion of approx. 6%, they are concentrated more in Transylvania, being even a majority in some areas. The distinctiveness of the Magyar problem is not represented so much by the ethnic rights within the actual Romanian society, but by the survival of some fragments of political programs produced by a history of turmoil, responsible for the perpetuation of some consolidated tensions and fears. The socio-economic and cultural position of the Magyars in the Romanian society was very good in the communist regime, and the addition of new cultural rights was, after the Revolution, without any problems. Within the depths of the preponderantly historical relations between the Romanians and the Magyars, some destructive tendencies were actualized, for a European modern society that is; on the one hand, revisionist dreams promoted through political, social and cultural actions by ultranationalist forced from within Romania, Hungary and especially, from the international Magyar movement; on the other hand, fears deeply rooted in the historical experiences of the Romanian population regarding violence and intolerances that, in the confuse post-revolutionary moments, risked to turn into conflicts that would have replaced into discussion the value of national suzerainty. The new party did not lack extremist internal tendencies, fact which accentuated the suspicions and fears of the Romanian population. One of the effects of the emergence of DUMR was the 'externalization' of Magyar problems. Instead of internalization, in the existent political parties, of the interests of the Magyar population and their assertion within this frame, as it happens in the great majority of the countries, in Romania they became a subject of negotiation between DUMR and the other political parties where the Magyar population was not represented.

NUPR

NUPR, a party developed especially in Transylvania, with a solid technocratic basis, voiced especially the anxiety regarding the nationalist-revisionist risks of some Magyar groups, and not a nationalistic ideology proper. It expressed the feelings and fears of the Romanian ethnic group, of a rather preventive-defensive orientation more than anti-Magyar, which NSF could not express due to some extremely strong Occidental pressure against any manifestation of the ethnic population belonging to the majority. Especially due to its technocratic basis, it was natural for an affinity of substance to exist between NUPR and SDPR, strengthened by the ethnic communality of the majority. Gradually, for internal reasons, as well as due to the relaxation of the Romanian-Magyar relation through a wise policy of both of the parts, NUPR diminished its importance, up to its practical disappearance.

GRP

The Great Romania Party is a party with a distinct profile, represents a typical product of the deep crisis of transition. It combines an nationalistic orientation that voiced the humiliations that the context of transition subjected Romania, with a violent critique, or rather moralistic basis and with a demagogical program, of the precarious situation of transition. The number of active members appears to be somewhat reduced. The solid nucleus of the party is composed, it seems, of persons that had assumed a nationalistic ideology in the communist regime, especially in the areas of the army, the militia and Securitate, marginalized after the Revolution. I believe that the power of GRP was generated by recoil by the extremism and intransigence of the right wing parties. It is not out of the question that a series of persons that wanted to politically express themselves to have been concentrated here, under the conditions of a constant and violent pressure of the right wing extremist parties against the communist 'witches': party members, 'Securitate members' etc. The explanation of the 'GRP phenomenon' cannot overlook its former president, Vadim Tudor, a charismatic persona, with exceptional oratorical talents and who managed to almost totally control the party. Many of the GRP leaders were selected and maintained by Vadim Tudor, which makes them loyal to him. Its force is powerful especially due to the fact that it is sustained by a large diffuse electorate, being the expression of a protest against the precarious results of transition, gaining a negative vote of the other parties.

The normalization of the socio-economic situation and the consolidation of the trust in the modern parties will gradually marginalize GRP that is if it will not be blow to pieces by the internal conflicts nurtured especially by the accentuated personality of its leader or it will change its profile.

DP

The Democrat Party (DP, PD in Romanian) also presents a technocratic extraction, the result by scission of the NSF. Petre Roman, the one that formed DP, represented the radical wing of reforms within the technocracy. The shock and crises of transition substantially diminished the popularity of the party in favor of a more moderate wing, by the assuming of a less simplistic approach of economic reforms, as well as by a progressive growth of interest for the promotion of social security.

A New Historical Cycle

The elections at the end of 2000 have ended a long political cycle. The historical parties, dominated by politicians formed before the communist regime, practically disappeared as a result of the failure of their government. The National Democrat Christian-Peasant Party, the leader of the 1997-2000 government, lost the election in a crushing manner, no longer being represented in the parliament. The losing of the elections produced in this party successive scissions, presently its chances of re-entering the parliament being small. The Social-Democrat Party merged with SDPR. The National-Liberal Party promotes the interests of the new social class of business people, thus obtaining a solid and stable electoral support. After the loss of the elections by the coalition that it was part of, it remained the only strong enough historical party. DP is a difficult political position. Ideologically, it claims to pertain to the social-democrat family, but, because of the fear of being engulfed by SDPR, it came closer to NLP, risking to be assimilated by the latter at least ideologically, or to split into a liberal wing and a social-democrat one, if its leader Traian Băsescu were to disappear.

The new SDP, the winner of the last elections, is about to also undergo profound modifications of strategy and program. The technocracy from the sphere of economy continues to have a important role in the government, but with a diminishing influence, due to the rapid privatization. It is very likely that the process of assimilation of the social-democrat ideological model to become much more rapid, distancing from the liberalist option of the ideology of the technocracy. Its competition with the other social-democrat party (DP), which could verge on the liberal option, lays even more pressure upon it, at least from the perspective of the future, towards social-democratic position.

Chapter 7

The Explanation of the Difficulties of Transition Given by Social Actors

Paradoxically, the interest for the explanation of transition began with the apparition of *anomalies*. As long as we all considered that the direction of change are correct and that the strategy of action is good, for it is entailed from the very experience and knowledge of the Occident and we all knowingly chose it, transition appeared to us as 'clear', 'intelligible', 'as we programmed it to be'. It is only when 'things started going as we did not expected them to go' that the interest for the explanation of the *real process* of change and the *unexpected results* of the program of action was crystallized.

The problem of identifying the explicative factors of transition is not just one that holds cognitive interest, but also an action one. Moreover, considering some explicative factors or others has complex effects on the action itself.

The Concept of *Anomaly*

In a very influential work in the '70s (*The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*), Thomas Kuhn introduced in the explaining of the dynamics of scientific knowledge the concept of *anomaly*. In a nutshell, his theory is the following:

- any explicative paradigm adopted by the scientific community at a given time is confronted with a series of facts that it cannot explain;
- some of the unexplained facts will become, through an effort of refinement of the paradigm, explainable. Yet others obstinately resist the efforts of explicative absorption in the existent paradigm. These are called *the anomalies* of the respective paradigm;
- thus, the anomalies are facts that resist to the efforts of explanation and, therefore, without negating the paradigm as such, they become a source for the growth of the dissatisfaction regarding the latter.
- the accumulation of anomalies does not automatically generate the abandonment of the existent paradigm, but it undermines its credibility;
- only in the moment when the possibility of constructing a new paradigm appears, capable of absorbing the accumulated anomalies, the scientific community renounces the old paradigm and adopts the new one.

Kuhn's theory can be generalized for any human action. Science is just a particular case of the theory of human action. This can have as object the explanation of reality (the knowledge) or its change/creation (the action itself). *The strategy is the paradigm of human action*. It is assumed that the action, if it is founded on a correct strategy, will accomplish its objectives at a satisfactory level. The failures/difficulties/perverse effects of the action can be explained either by the *circumstances* under which the action takes place, or by the *correctable imperfections* of the employed strategy. The bettering of the strategy, of its capacity of being applied and of standing up to the adverse conditions will have as result the diminishing/elimination of failures and perverse effects. The failures that are not caused by external conditions or that cannot be absorbed through the perfecting of the strategy of action represent *the anomalies of the respective strategy*. As with the case of science, in the more general case of action, the persistence of difficulties in spite of the efforts of perfecting of the strategy makes them to tend to change their status: they become anomalies. The accumulation of anomalies is to generate a crisis of the strategy.

Kuhn's theory presupposes that the accumulation of anomalies generates the search for an alternative explicative paradigm: one better than the existent one and that makes the unexplained facts up to then, explainable. The extension of this theory to the explanation of action would state thus: *the excessive accumulation of unexpected negative effects, i.e. of anomalies, generates a critique of the adopted strategy and an exploration of the alternative strategic options*. If the change has already taken place, the matter becomes only a theoretical one: was the adopted strategy the best possible one? Where not there better alternatives?

The accumulation of anomalies awakens the interest for the exploration of alternatives. At the same time, the passing is forced, from an *epistemology of single solution problems* to an *epistemology of multiple solution problems*.

The Intrinsic Explicative Factors versus the Extrinsic Ones

It is vital that the explanation of the difficulties arisen in the process of action be given in direct relation with the very strategy of action. From this perspective, we can identify two

great types of explanations of the difficulties that the action confronts with: explanations through *extrinsic* factors and *intrinsic* factors. In the present analysis I will take into consideration particularly the case of explaining the transition.

The intrinsic explicative factors are those factors that depend on the very strategy of action. The intrinsic explicative factors are of two types:

- a) *inevitable intrinsic factors* – pertaining to this category are”
 - *inherent difficulties of an ample process of change*: however high the dedication of the collectivity for the promotion of change would be, and however good the adopted strategy would be, due to the ampleness of the objective, inevitable difficulties will arise: processes of disorganization inherent to any passing from the manner of organization to the other, economic costs of restructuring and readapting, social tensions and conflicts;
 - *the inevitable negative secondary effects of any action*: the drugs, however efficient they would be, they also have negative secondary effects. The restructuring of the economy is, inevitably, accompanied by a growth of unemployment, periods of economic fall that negatively affect that standard of life etc.;
 - *inevitable error of any process of learning associated to the realization of a totally new action*;
- b) *evitable intrinsic factors* – are those characteristics of the strategic options responsible for the failures, negative effects, difficulties in attaining the objectives. It is useful to make a distinction between the minute imperfections of a strategy, which can be corrected by its perfecting, and the structural characteristics of the respective strategy. The explaining of these factors opens the problem of reconsidering the option, exploring the strategic alternatives.

The extrinsic explicative factors refer to those factors that generate the difficulties of action, being external to the strategy itself. The strategy is correct. It is not its quality that is being responsible for the difficulties appeared in the process of change, but a series of circumstances independent from it. If these circumstances had not existed, the process of transition, for example, oriented by the adopted strategy, would have had the expected positive results.

The extrinsic factors are of several types:

- a) *the conditions of action*: the concrete context where transition takes place in one country or the other can support or hinder the attaining of assumed objectives. The success/failure of transition is due to the state of global economy, economic structures inherited from the communist regime (irrationally developed industry, obsolete technology), geopolitical position;
- b) *the will and capacity of actors to act*: for the success of an action, very important are motivation of the actors to attain the assumed objective, their capacity of organizing and collectively take action (the human and social capital), the inherited mentalities;
- c) *social resistances*: any ample change comes against, inevitably, resistances coming from the various social groups that might have adverse interests/attitudes

to the direction of change, Such factors are explored particularly in the Marxist theory of social classes.

All the negative effects of the difficulties encountered by a process of change, regardless of the factors that had generated them, are, usually, gathered under the concept of *cost* of change.

The Theory of the Costs of Transition

Two Types of Costs of Transition: Economic Costs and Social Costs

Even from the beginning of transition, it was considered that the economic decline of the first years of transition is, up to a certain point, inevitable, a sort of convalescence of the economy before its recovery. Most of the enterprises, in the process of restructuring and adapting to the new economic context, will have to reduce from the start production in order to reorient it. The enterprises with no perspectives were to be closed.

Initially, an optimistic vision was dominant. An immediate re-launch of the economy was counted on, with significant falls. The economic correction of certain areas was to be rapidly compensated by setting up new private enterprises and the bettering of others. Some economic sectors were to rapidly and spectacularly launch, compensating the losses from other sectors. It is the case of the famous wagers of agriculture and tourism put forth by the political leaders of 1990.

It is only with the recording of important failures of the economy, beyond what seemed to be a readjusting phenomenon, that made the economic costs of transition to be brought into play, without pinpointing the expected proportions and their sources. The downfall of GDP in 1991-1993 was considered to be not only normal, but even positive, representing an indicator for the restructuring of economy. The growth of GDP from 1995-1996 was criticized from the then parties in opposition was being artificial, the result of the stopping of reform, and not a healthy start of economic re-launch. The DCR government of 1997 did not even establish as objective the economic growth, but the acceleration of reform, i.e. rapid privatization, the closing down of enterprises without perspectives – therefore, implicitly, the continuation of economic fall.

The fall of economy much beyond the initial expectations started to give rise to the questioning of its interpretation as an inevitable cost. More and more, the need of an explanation took shape. Lately, the analyses that stress the unexplainable negative effects of transition are multiplied, dramatically synthesized for instance in the title of a book for the analysis of the economic evolution in the 20th century: *Transition Worse than a War* (Belli, 2002).

To the economic costs, ***the social costs of transition*** were added soon.

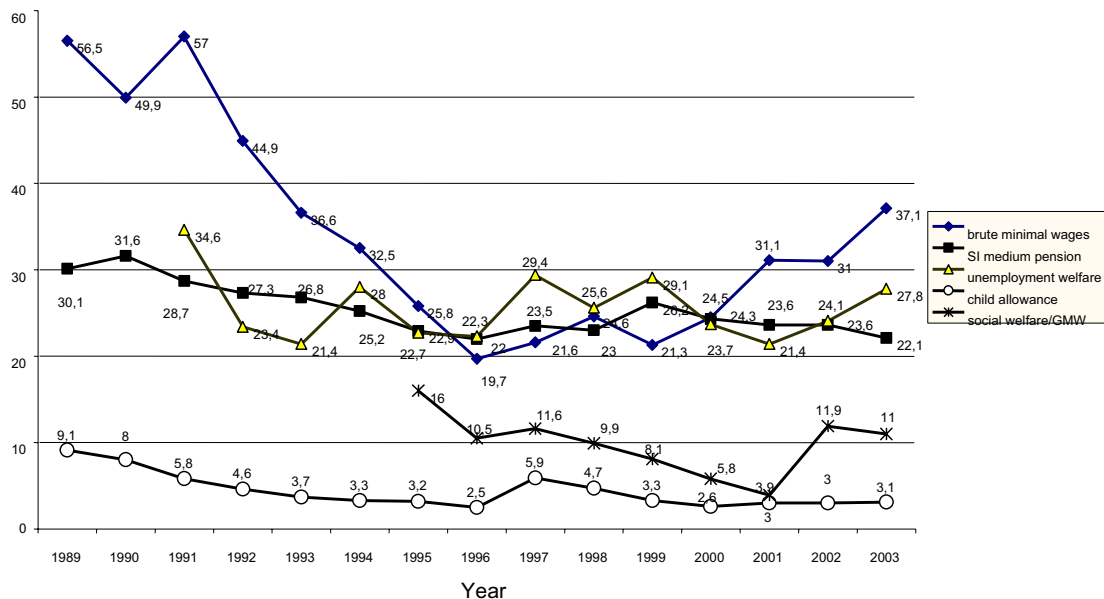
The fall of economy, regarded as inevitable and even positive, was to adversely affect the standard of life of the population. And, indeed, the restructuring of the economy had as effect a genuine explosion of poverty. A first peak was recorded in 1991-1993, and a second in 1996-2000.

The impoverishment had within the process of transition a series of distinct sources:

- *the growth of unemployment*: all the state enterprises were characterized by an excess of work force. Their cleansing of this excess was a necessary condition for

economic re-launch. Privatization was to finally cleanse the ballast of salaried people. Ulteriorly, the need of readjustment of many enterprises was added, as some of them were to be closed in the near future. Perhaps the most obvious process of restructuring in the mining industry, where the number of salaried people was dramatically reduced;

- *the reducing of the number of salaried work places* took place in an extremely swift manner, reaching numbers difficult to conceive initially: from 8.2 million in 1990 to 4.6 million in 2002. The reduction of the salaried work places was poorly compensated by private businesses and especially by an agriculture of subsistence that had become obviously less productive;
- *the reduction in real terms of the medium wages and in more accentuated manner of the small wages*: the growth of the polarization of wages, under the conditions where they are already low, lead to the growth of salaried poverty;
- *the replacement of wages with sources of income from the underground economy*, most of the latter far lower and without medical or social insurances: this fact will produce in the following decades a generation of elderly people with a low coverage in social insurances;
- *the social benefits* eroded much faster than wages. A great mass of persons (pensioners, families with children) have therefore suffered a more accentuated process of impoverishment in transition;
- *the increase of social polarization*: transition had as one of its objectives the surpassing of the communist option of excessive and forced equality. Such a policy of equalization was criticized from a moral point of view – it is fair that ‘both the working man, and the non-working man to earn just as much’ –, but, even from the point of view of performance – the insufficient differentiation of rewards does not stimulate performance. If the increase in economic and social differentiation/polarization is not performed complementary with a substantial economic growth, it will inevitably produce a growth of poverty. Alongside the effect of impoverishment, social polarization generated the accentuation of the phenomenon of relative frustration. Comparing themselves with those that became rich overnight, the great majority of the population feels even poorer;
- *the social disaggregation* represented one of the most markedly negative effects, difficult to absorb: the disaggregation of the family, alcoholism and, lately, drug addiction, child abandonment, neglect up to abuse of the children, degrading situations for women (prostitution, traffic of human beings), criminality that adversely affects not only the victims, but also the delinquents and their families, corruption and democracy, alienation; the growth of morbidity and avoidable mortality; finally the socio-economic crisis of some communities.



Graph 7.1. The dynamics of the minimal gross wages and of the various social benefits as percent of the minimal gross wages. Source: ICCV database

The Ideological Function of the Concept of Cost of Transition and Changes of Attitude

The concept of *cost* has had an important role in the elaboration of the ideology of transition. This concept represent a manner of processing within the collective consciousness the problems/ difficulties/failures of transition. On the one hand, the difficulties of transition are accepted as real, and on the other hand, they were initially interpreted as being inevitable: negative effects, which cannot be avoided, of a fundamentally positive process. Major changes are accompanied by inevitable negative processes. Generally, any good thing has its cost. Only profound social change is accompanied by tensions in the system, negative of the destructuring and restructuring of institutions, mentalities and system of values, tensions between the new and old structures, incoherence within the new system, including insufficient incompetence for the realization of changes that had not been previously experimented in history.

Accepting the inevitability of costs is an important component of an efficient strategy of change. On the contrary, the focus on difficulties demoralizes, lowers the motivation of engaging into the process of change and generates social tensions. Therefore, no assuming the costs had negative effects, of a paralyzing effect on the change itself, generating possibly higher costs, on the medium and long term: engaging in the process of change, halting the promotion of change, return to the initial forms or adoption of solutions that minimize the negative effects, but delay the change.

However, on the other hand, *assuming* the costs as being inevitable blocks the critical reconsideration of strategic options and the exploration of alternatives.

As the supported costs grow in an unexpected rhythm, the attitude of the collectivity has rapidly evolved towards the consideration of the costs of transition as being evitable, and thus unacceptable, imputable to the authors of the process of change.

After an initial enthusiasm, the collectivity began to be more and more unsatisfied with the non-realization of the hopes of the Revolution, the more as it paid the costs of transition itself.

In a first stage, an intransigent attitude dominated, a 'manly' one, of assuming the costs of transition. The discontent of the population was generated by the failure to understand the program of transition. The political actors were obsessed with the better *explaining* of the reasons of the already made options. The population is, in principle, positively oriented, but its capacity of understanding is limited. As a consequence, the simple explanation could lead to the awaited results: the acceptance of inevitable costs.

Some measure to diminish the social costs taken by the 1992-1996 government were labeled as being demagogical, with serious negative effects on the process of transition. They were considered to represent the expression of a populism that has paralyzed the process of change, being responsible of the crises of transition. It was at that time that the expression that described the hesitant pattern of transition, *stop and go*, was coined.

The explanation of the un-acceptance by the population of the costs of change invoked by the ideology of transition was the following: an incoherent mass mentality, especially based on an insufficient understanding of the processes of change, to which the remains of a communist mentality are added. The collectivity is characterized by a rupture between the abstract acceptance of the Occidental model and un-acceptance, due to the failure to understand the necessity of sacrifices, but also due to the focus on immediate interests. The population is not ripe enough to understand and support the changes, not because it did not accept them, but because it falls more under the pressures of daily life difficulties. A politician coined it with the label of *stupid people*. The population is tempted to exert a continuous social pressure, which, consequently, is, if not necessarily *anti-reform*, definitely *limiting for the reform*. The social pressure exerted for the diminution of the social costs of transition is, therefore, counterproductive.

Also, the tendency of the population to attribute in an exaggerate manner the responsibility of the difficulties of transition to political actors is counterproductive just as much: to politicians, political parties, parliament and government.

In this period, an ideological pressure was developed to convince the population that, in order to accomplish an efficacious transition, with benefic effects on the medium and long term, it is necessary to accept the present costs: a present sacrifice, for future benefits. The difficulty of accepting such an ideological scheme stemmed from the embarrassing coincidence with Ceaușescu's ideology: sacrifices now for the 'bright future'. The communist program for changing Romanian was characterized by the same scheme of the costs of change. Contrary to this expectation, history more likely proved that the bearing of some enormous costs by the collectivity was not compensated by ulterior benefits, but by the multiplication of the former.

Extending the comparison between the attitude of the collectivity towards the costs of constructing communism and towards the costs of transition, substantial differences can be easily pointed out. The communist program was from the beginning estimated by the population as being illegitimate. As a consequence, the costs were, in general, estimated as representing something illegitimate, imposed by force. It is only after the successes of

social and economic launch of the '60s, when the population began to visibly benefit from the positive effects of the communist program, that a certain availability of acceptance of the costs was contoured. Things radically changed in the '70-'80s, once with the entering of the socialist Romanian society into a deepening crisis. The costs of the communist project became not only unacceptably high, but also estimated to be useless, namely that they were no longer perceived to lead to a successful change in the future.

In a second stage, another attitude schema was crystallized. What was been labeled as populism of a rather communist inspiration begins to turn into a mandatory strategic dimension. The acceleration of reform cannot be realized through a moral intransigence of the Kantian type, but on the basis of pragmatic morals that pay a certain attention to social supportability. An explicit expression of this orientation we find in the new ideology of international institutions, for the support of the program of accelerated reform of the government installed in 1997. Contrary to the up-to-then philosophy of social policy, the famous 'compensatory payments' are introduced, accorded to the dismissed miners and the extended to all the situations of mass licensing. These compensations were conceived as a manner to avoid social movement generated by the acceleration of reform. The newly formulated pragmatic attitude could be summarized in the following terms: no matter how good a strategy of change is, if it is not accepted by the population, its rigorist intransigence will inevitably be confront with huge perturbative processes, its costs being sensibly higher than the ones of a more flexible attitude, that takes into account also the *social supportability* of change. As such, even the international institutions that intransigently sustained the purity of reform (IMF, World Bank) started to recommend the promotion of a balance between the requirements of the reform and the needs of the collectivity. Such a flexible-rendering of the attitude towards the support for the areas of fundamental social interest is growing in the last few years. It is the case, for instance, of the crisis of the capacity of the population to support the costs of public utilities. If initially the IMF pressed upon the rapid elimination of all subventions, facing its catastrophic effects, accepted their continuation, yet in a less focused form.

A true tendency of overthrow in the ideology of transition was produced. The formulation of *the acceptance of social costs in order to sustain an efficient transition* tends to be replaced with a new formula: *the reduction of social costs of the reform in order to make the latter socially bearable/supportable*.

Types of Extrinsic Factors in the Explanation of Transition

In the analysis of the explanation of the difficulties of transition, the importance of the factors referring to the situational conditions of Romania (inherited economic structures, geopolitical context) tended to be diminished, the stress laying on the actual internal social-cultural factors that pint to the responsibility of the collectivity. The rejection of the importance of the situational explicative factors is the effect of the *active attitude*. The exclusive invocation of the situational factors represents more an excuse and it has as effect the lowering in motivation of the effort.

Extrinsic Factors 1: the Deficit of Mentality Required by Democracy and Market Economy, the Enduring of a Communist Mentality

The functioning of a system is sustained by specific mentalities. Major social changes are inevitably confronted with the obstacle of the mentalities engendered by the former structures and with the lack of mentalities that could sustain, from the point of view of the attitude and the behavior, the new institutional system. The invocation of the former mentalities in order to explain the difficulties of change is an extremely convenient explanatory scheme, presenting an intuitive degree of credibility. It absorbs the uncertainty, the doubts and the critiques regarding the strategic options that do not produce the expected results. The invocation of 'the remains of the former mentality' appears in all the processes of major change. As the actual transition, the communist regime was also characterized by the massive recourse to such an explanatory factor for the failures, as well as for the critical attitudes of the collectivity regarding the program of change: 'the inherited bourgeois mentalities'.

One can easily observe the growth in considering this factor as the difficulties of change accumulate.

A illustrative example: in order to probate/identify the new entrepreneurial mentality of courageously engaging into business, in many public opinion surveys the following question is used: 'Do you prefer a poorly paid work place, but stable, or a better paid one, but less stable?' The majority of the population constantly prefers a more stable work place, although poorly paid. The analysts see in this state of mind a confirmation of the persistence of 'the communist mentality of passiveness, dependence on the *daddy-state*, which offers a sure, stable life, although poorer.' Such an interpretation offers an explanatory comfort: we do not have to wonder why transition is not going well. Is this interpretation correct? Paradoxically, such a collective attitude is also recorded in the consolidated capitalist countries. The option for a more stable work place, although not so well paid does not express a communist mentality, but rather a rational attitude in a society based on salaried work, complementary to a relatively high level of unemployment. Especially in a period of transition, many who searched for better paid work places, yet less stable, if they did not possess superior professional skills, as it, inevitably, happens frequently, undergo the risk of becoming unemployed on the long term in the conditions of the dramatic drop in the numbers of salaried work places.

Many such interpretation of the attitude of the population as expression of an inherited mentality can be invoked, which are, actually, rather realist attitudes regarding the actual situation. The distrust in the private enterprises can be partially the expression of a mentality of the communist society, but also a realistic estimation of the abuses against the salaried people of an often abusive capitalism due to the deficit of social control. The estimation that 'they lived better before' is true for a large part of the population, not necessarily expressing 'the nostalgia engendered by the former mentality'.

The using in the explanation of the 'remains of the communist mentality', which by no means can be excluded as a real factor, is practiced with an un-dissimulated satisfaction that an enduring justification for the difficulties and failures was found, without any care for the determination of their real weight. We frequently encounter lately formulations of the type 'Only when the actual generation, tarred by the remains of the communist mentality, will disappear, will the Romanian society be able to function normally'. The explanation, usually multi-factorial, of a complex phenomenon inevitably imposes a differentiation of the contribution of the various factors. Neglecting such an analysis, as

well as invoking only some of the factors and ignoring the others, presents the risk of transforming the explanation into an ideological justification.

Extrinsic Factors 2: the Former Communists

Even from the beginning of transition, some political actors were obsessed with the danger of the former communists (*members of the nomenklatura, neo-communists, crypto-communists, reformed communists*) who, if were to occupy important positions, could produce a blockage of change. Although we cannot find anywhere an analytical approach to such a factor with adverse attitude, it is extremely frequently invoked in order to explain the failures of transition. The blaming the former communists oscillates on three distinct dimensions:

- a necessary moral sanction: those responsible of the communist disaster that had occupied leading positions in the communist regime, no longer have the moral right to occupy such positions. The transgression of this moral expectation is to be found in the bitter reflection ‘to new times, still the old us’;
- carriers of communist mentalities: it is assumed that the former members of the Communist Party present a higher risk to be infected by the former mentality, becoming thus a continuous obstacle, even beyond their eventual good-faith;
- the assuming of the existence of some forms of political organization of the former communists that *sabotage* the promotion of reform, being able to perform, in a favorable moment, actions for the reinstallation of communism: without bringing explicit arguments, the expression of suspicion regarding the reorganization of the former communist groups, in order to oppose in different manner the reform, is to be found frequently. It is insistently suggested, even if not always explicitly, the existence of a new type of ‘class struggle’. The former communists will not relinquish communism that easily. The communist revolution had obsessively used the scheme of *class struggle*, which, beyond a degree of correctness, had three ideological-political functions: 1) to explain the difficulties of the communist regime; 2) to explain the mass anticommunist attitudes and 3) as a means to fight for power. The communist regime also invoked the necessity of *vigilance* towards the remains of the former social classes ‘infiltrated’ in the leading positions of the new regime.

The presupposition of the existence of some new form of the class struggle is difficult to sustain. The ‘witch hunt’ has reached levels difficult to explain by the real danger presented by the ‘former communists’. The politicians that called themselves ‘the true anticommunists’, ‘the true reformists’ made out of these titles the key-element of the political programs. It cannot be accounted for why so many of the former communists, now businessmen and prosperous capitalists, obtaining incomes that they would have never dreamed of in the former regime, and that enjoyed in an equal measure the new freedom, would still have any reason to plot against transition. It is not all clear what could communism mean after the fall of the USSR and, especially, in the new international context. On the other hand, the group of faithful communists was in Romanian much more reduced than in the other former socialist European countries, not to mention Russia. Nevertheless, in our country their threat seems to have been invoked

much more frequently. Actually, many persons at the top of the anticommunist parties had also been members of the Communist Party, some of them even occupying leading position.

Extrinsic Factors 3: the Former Securitate Members

The institution of Securitate was constantly regarded as the most solid instrument of maintaining Ceaușescu's regime, feared and hated by the entire collectivity. No one doubts that the most inhuman repressive measures were taken by Securitate. If the Communist Party disappeared all by itself through a natural dissolving, the Securitate was from the beginning taken over by the army, placed under severe control, structurally reformed and massively cleansed of the former members.

Debates on the moral responsibility of the Securitate for the maintaining of Ceaușescu's regime and especially for the bloody repression of 1989 appeared even from the beginning. But they were distorted by their transformation into an instrument for political struggle. In a totally bizarre manner, the moral responsibility was transferred from the institution to its individual members. The adoption of the law for the disclosure of those that were the agents of the 'political police' degenerated into interminable disputes and insurmountable difficulties in the equitable identification of the responsibility of those involved.

In the discourse of many politicians it is insistently invoked the actions of 'the Securitate members' that are responsible not only for their deeds under the former regime, but also for many problems in the process of transition. In an amazing manner, the theme of a new danger for the transition was launched, this one responsible for its failures: 'the Securitate members'. When president Constantinescu announced in 2000 his decision not to run for presidency, he made the remark: 'I was defeated by the Securitate members.' And the famous Ticu Dumitrescu¹², in a televised interview of 2003, was even more blunt: 'The country is lead by undercover Securitate members'. Invoking the danger of the Securitate members suggest the existence of some groups of former Securitate members that, it is not clear for what reasons, working in a coordinate, yet undercover manner, would promote their own anti-transition policy.

In the evaluation of the potential influence on the process of transition, several factors must be taken into consideration. Firstly, a historical one: in the evolution of the communist regime, several changes took place in the style of the Securitate. In the 50s, the Securitate was the main instrument of a repression of hardly imaginable cruelty. The consolidation of the communist system, especially on an international level, lead to a change in the methods of Securitate. Through Romania's attitude of independence from the USSR, complementary to the awareness of the impossibility to change the socialist system, communism began to become more passively accepted, as an inevitability imposed by history, but sometimes with the hope of its 'step by step change'. The Securitate also became relatively tolerant, in the context of a high security of the system, brutally intervening especially in the suppression of the attempts of anticommunist political organization or of the demonstrative protests. Secondly, a part of Securitate fulfilled functions necessary to any state. Finally, many of the former Securitate members, due to the considerable 'social capital' acquired under the communist regime,

¹² Political figure (member of PNȚCD) that spent many years in the communist prisons.

have become in the new system successful businessmen, undergoing a rapid process of political reconversion, even if some of them had been faithful to the regime.

Extrinsic Factors 4: the Character of the Romanian People/Mentalities Consolidated by a Negative History of the Romanian People

Alongside the enduring of the communist mentality, of the nomenklatura and Securitate members, the responsibility for the failures of transition is often placed on the negative characteristics of the Romanian people. The transition was accompanied by a true explosion, probably the most accentuated from the modern history of Romania, of collective self-denigration, going up to violent anti-Romanian-ism, whose most salient manifestation can be found in the expression 'I am ashamed to be Romanian'. Such a factor of metaphysical nature, the supposedly negative national character of the Romanian people – lack of seriousness and responsibility, deficit of discipline, lack of will to work, incapacity to finalize things, making a 'mockery' of serious matters, 'mythical-rendering' –, was often invoked during the periods of social crisis from the last centuries.

What is the explanation of such an explosion of self-denigration? The existence of some presupposed negative features crystallized in a difficult history cannot be ruled out. It is however more likely that in a much greater measure the invocation of thus factor represents a convenient manner of extrinsic explanation of the difficulties of transition. I believe that it is not important to answer the question: 'Is there a character of the Romanian people, sufficiently crystallized, that could account for the actual problems?', but a totally different one: 'How do we justify the obsessive invocation of the character of the Romanian as the most important explanation of the actual difficulties?'

Extrinsic Factors 5: Immorality, Individualism, Corruption

An explanation of the failures of transition, more and more invoked lately, which tends to replace the factors enumerated so far – communist mentality, communists/Securitate members, the character of the Romanian people –, is a deficit of morality, abuse of power, corruption. This type of extrinsic factor targets especially the leading class that, by virtue of its position, has access to obtaining some illicit incomes: the corrupt politicians, the 'local barons'.

Quite many observers notice with certain surprise the exaggerated character of the accusations of corruption. Transition was, obviously, accompanied by a substantial growth of corruption. But its transformation into a central factor of the actual problem of transition more likely has an ideological bent. On the one hand, forms of corruption – and even serious ones – are also present in the Occident. On the other hand, the profound causes of corruption are avoided most of the times, the accent falling on the deficit of prevention and sanction measures.

It is at the same time evident that some estimations of the magnitude of corruption processes are exaggerated, with accentuated pedagogical intentions. It is the case of using the data provided by the public surveys. The population estimates that the volume of corruption deeds has grown at late. Such a estimation represents a well-know distortion of perception: the awareness at the level of the collectivity of a social problem gives rise

to the estimation of its growth as being greater than it really is. We could even formulate the hypothesis that the real dimension of corruption, due to the measures taken in the last period of time, has diminished.

The Explanation of the Focus of Extrinsic Factors

The accentuated invocation of extrinsic factors in the explanation of the difficulties of transition does not represent the result of the empirical ascertainment of the degree of intervention of the aforementioned, but more likely a logical conclusion of a theoretical configuration: how can the serious negative effects of transition be accounted for, in the conditions where we accept the correctness of the strategy of transition formulated by the Occident, to which we add the extremely supportive international context? *Logically*, the only explanation can be found in the incapacity of the internal actors, the lack of democratic and capitalistic experience being the softest factor, to which add the culture of the Romanian people and the communist-Securitate remains.

Two social groups were inclined to use this explicative pattern. Firstly, the members of the historical parties, often designated with the syntagma *the Taliban of the Romanian political system*. The invocation of such extrinsic factors represented an attractive explanation of the lack of popularity of the political groups that believed themselves to be the only entitled to take over the leadership of the process of transition. Caught in the trap of some counterproductive mentalities, the population is responsible for the failures of transition diffusely, through a weakly productive behavior for the necessary reforms, as well as directly, through the electoral options they have made. The results of the first elections of 1990, after a first stage of accusations of falsifying the results, failed due to the evidence that they have correctly expressed the will of the population, were contested in an elitist manner on the grounds of a deficient collective mentality. The very often used label of ‘Sunday of the blind’ placed on the Election Day became a standard accusation of the conservatory character of the population. Firstly, an elitist group that, developing an intransigently anticommunist attitude, has accepted without any reserves the authority of the strategy of transition and of the international institutions that promote it, being in difficulty when to give an explanation for the failures of that period.

Secondly, an small ‘elitist’ group (philosophers, essayists, political analysts) constituted out of a combination of naïve idealism and incapacity to engage in the process of elaboration of the practical programs of action and to obtain popular support. Especially, this elitist group proved to be obsessively oriented towards a violent critique of ‘Romanianism’. Antiromanianism generated a paradox whose surpassing was attempted through a fragile solution: the Romanians, with all the flaws, are the mass of the population; the critical elites have succeeded, through their quality of elite, to rise above their condition of Romanians.

If the hypothesis formulated here is correct, the implications are troubling: the assuming by the Romanians of the guilt is a massive excuse of the flaws of the strategy constructed by the Occident and, what is more important, a powerful ideological instrument for the control of any completely unfounded tendency to revive communism. It would not be senseless to make an unpleasant parallel between the invocation of the danger of communism in Romania with the one of the weapons of mass destruction from Iraq.

In this area was also lately constituted a pattern in treating Romania more and more aggressively critical. The various Occidental functionaries, paradigmatic being Baroness Emma Nicholson and the former US ambassador, Michael Guest, persistently attack Romania on the various topics that suggest failures of transition with behavioral origins: institutions for abandoned children, international adoptions, corruption, the political dependence of justice. When a topic is exhausted through clearing or heavy usage, another topic appears in the seemingly endless cycle. The strategy can be interpreted from two different perspectives – a justifying-constructive one, expressed by a high EU representative regarding the wayward critiques of the Baroness on international adoptions: even if they are exaggerated or incorrect, these critiques must be taken as useful pressures for you because they motivate your effort; the other, a justifying-defensive one: the responsibility of the failures is exclusively attributed to internal actors.

The Mass-media in Transition

The mass-media had an extremely important role in the process of transition. The boom of mass-media (a huge number of newspapers, television and radio stations) has answered the tremendous need of *information*, but also of *participation* of the collectivity.

How did the mass-media answer this need? It is not the question here to make moralizing evaluations. Beyond any discussion, the mass-media had a sensibly positive effect in the process of transition. They had an overwhelming effect on the social processes of change, fulfilling three essential functions: information, support of change, control.

1. They represent by far the most important *source of information* for the collectivity on the problems and activities of public institutions.
2. They have promoted and successfully sustained the strategy of change of the Romanian society, exerting a continuous motivation of the will for change and overcoming difficulties.
3. They have exerted a constant pressure to ensure the correctness of the act of administration of the society, manifesting a sharp vigilance regarding the acts of corruption. It can be estimated that the most efficacious monitoring of the act of government was accomplished by the mass-media.

On the other hand we cannot ignore the fact that the mass-media represent a part of the society in transition, suffering its global distortions, sharing its illusions and, on their turn, inducing distortions in the other components of the society.

The public image of the mass-media is predominantly positive, but there are nonetheless also reserves from a very important segment of the population. In 2003, 55% of the population has a high/relatively high trust in the mass-media, a decrease since 2000, when it was at about 62% (see chapter 8). 20% of the population perceived the journalists as being all/a great part of corrupt. It is true that the persons from public institutions were being perceived as corrupt by a much larger segment (between 44% and 69%).

The Mass-media and the Mechanisms of Democracy

In the evaluation of the manner in which the mass-media have realized the function of *informing the public, facilitating political participation and monitoring political institutions*, we must take into account the social-political context where they functioned.

The mass-media are the main source of highly credible information, without being able to avoid the deforming pressures of the global process of transition. The strategy of transition has reached the status of being a dogma, beyond any doubt, for the political actors as well as for the mass-media. Any IMF recommendation becomes an *absolute must*. In the context of the strategy of transition, the mass-media have become, inevitably, the prisoners of a type of dogmatism.

Frequently, the mass-media were placed in the position of exigent instrument of monitoring the implementation of the strategic requests formulated by the Occident. The analysis of the messages continuously transmitted by the mass-media, particularly during the first period of transition, can easily detect a pronounced pedagogical orientation and a monitoring one: the task assumed by the mass-media is that of making the collectivity understand the strategy and nature of difficulties, of identifying the actions estimated to be deviations from the requisites of transition. Many analysts, leading actors in the mass-media, appear as guardians of the purity of the strategy of transition, promoters of the points of view of the legitimate institutions that patronize the conception of transition: IMF, World Bank, European Commission, European Council, various Occidental political actors, Western press. Any negative comment on the Western media is taken over by the internal mass-media with an un-dissimulated satisfaction.

Such an attitude of the mass-media corresponded to the expectations of the collectivity. For the latter, the strategy represented a reference frame above the chaotic and disappointing movement. In the light of the model of action and the Occidental support, an optimistic perspective was being contoured. In addition, it represented the grounds for continuous critique of the government and the actors of power. We will someday be able to realize, what we already know it to be, the good. The adoption without reserves of the strategy of transition represented an important source for the successful accomplishment of transition.

The mass-media in the Romanian society in transition presents a distinct epistemological position, different from the Western mass-media. Especially during the first part of transition, the mass-media was characterized by the promotion of a clear-cut intellectual and moral superiority: we know what it is to be done, we are motivated to do it, we are correct; 'they' do not really know how the reform must be done, have obsolete mentalities, a weak motivation, are corrupt. 'We have our eyes on them' (expression often repeated by a known journalist). The assuming of a definite knowledge and a moral superiority justified the position of *orienters* of the actions of change and *guardians* of the ideological and moral purity of the process of transition. The comments are very clear and directive: 'The government delays the privatization', 'It is imperative to immediately introduce the immovability of the magistrates', 'The core problem of the reform of justice is now to ensure its political independence'. From the discourse of the mass-media, the formulation of alternatives and doubts is almost excluded: *this* or *that* should be done? What the pro and con arguments? It is good or not to do...? What are the priorities?

The test of *assuming the incertitude* is decisive for the evaluation of intellectual attitude. During the first years of transition, the discourse in the mass-media was characterized by assuming a very high certitude.

Lately, the differences of *style* from the Western mass-media and the ones in the countries in transition have begun to be paid attention to. From this point of view, the Western mass-media have a different orientation. As a rule, the journalists do not assume the role of specialists, but rather of *commentators* of the deeds of social actors and the positions of the specialists. It is rarely that the mass-media promote solutions considered to be beyond any doubt and do not judge with certitude the correctness of actions. The mass-media tend to have a rather neutral attitude towards the ideological options and actions of the political actors, assuming the function of presenting to the public the diversity of the points of view.

The aforementioned differences of style do not essentially stem from lags of professionalism, but rather they express different social contexts. The Occident represents a very stable and legitimate society. The standard state of mind is dominated by a *meliorative* spirit. Things are, generally, good. The system is fair, the direction is good. The actors search for solutions of betterment and, until now, have succeeded in doing so reasonably well. It is not supposed that the mass-media can identify better solutions than the ones of the political actors. The function of the mass-media is the one of *accompanist* of the process, making it more transparent for the public and facilitating a better public dialogue. It is, eventually, also a guardian – not the only one – of the correctness of the behavior of the actors, not so much from a cognitive point of view, but from a legal and moral one.

It is true that also the Western mass-media were characterized by a manner of treating the societies in transition different from the one practiced for their own societies, focused on the assuming of an intellectual and moral superiority. An accentuated preference is evident for the taking over of information with a negative connotation on the events in the countries in transition, without a minimal critical reserve towards its source.

It would be false to explain the critical attitude, with predilection, of the mass-media through the theory of 'being bought by the Occident'. The explanation of the assuming of such a critical function, beyond the standard Occidental limits, also lies in the process of alienation from the political process, commonly shared by the collectivity and the mass-media. Pushed into passivism, the mass-media were tempted to consider that their only manner of participation is the critical surveillance of the government, up to a generalized suspicion. The critical attitude of the mass-media has a simple structure: the strategy of transition is correct; its main Occidental promoters are right; the government is guilty of the failures of transition, to which other internal actors contribute.

Sent home having banished Ceaușescu, the population had an accentuated need of participation to the leadership of the society. The mass-media could not compensate the lack of some satisfactory mechanisms that would grant to the collectivity the possibility of participating at the level of their expectations. They were deficient in the providing of a debate frame for the problems of the Romanian society and the directions of change.

Frustrated by the lack of opportunities of participation to the leadership of the society, the collectivity finds in the mass-media a drug that satisfies its need of confirmation of the fact that the political system functions badly, being seized by corruption, incompetence and, especially, indifference towards the population and, particularly, it does not grant the latter a real opportunity to politically participate. The collectivity has found in the mass-media the confirmation of its state of collective victim of corruption, incompetence/inherited mentality and bad intentions of the political actors. The

similitude with the *Mioritza*¹³ ballad is suggestive. The mass-media appear as a minstrel that gives to the auditorium the tale of the tragic course of events. The public assists terrified, but incapable to intervene one way or the other in the course of the criminal act. Only exceptionally did the mass-media succeed in preventing the typically-for-*Mioritza* crime. More frequently, they have only managed to clamor for the punishment of the criminal.

The complex of guilt was deepened by a dogmatic faith in the correctness of the strategy of transition and in the authority of the ones that had produced it. The dogmatic faith in the correctness of the strategy has become a sort of religion that make the difficulties acceptable in the perspective of a promised prosper future.

It is not the journalists who created such a state of mind, they have only nurtured it. As any drug, the exclusively critical message towards the organisms of power only succeeds in conferring a perverse satisfaction, having as effect the deepening of collective passivism.

Contrary to the current expectations, the assuming by the mass-media, beyond a certain point, of the role of 'guard dog' has blocked their constructive political function. An obsessively repeated TV ad presents a well-known journalist who clearly expresses the structural hostility of the press towards the political actors: 'We make life difficult for some, so that you might have a better life.' But why not make the life of the population better by contributing to the perfecting of the policies of change? The function of the mass-media of surveillance over 'power' is normal. However there is the risk of deepening the passivism: the replacement of the function of providing a frame for participation and public debate of the problems of collectivity with the assuming of the role of critic of power organisms at all costs.

The Mass-media and the Voluptuousness of Failure

Romanian suffers from a true pathology of the *voluptuousness of failure*. It can be easily detected a common temptation of the public and the mass-media in finding a special gratification in the invocation of failure. Such pathology can be considered to be a perverse reaction to the situation of helplessness.

The pattern of the voluptuousness has been crystallized in the collective experience produced by the communist regime. But there it had a clear rational fundament. The crisis of the socialist society, associated with the blockage of any action of change, generated ***a desirability of change produced not by action, but by crisis, through the accumulation of failures***. The 'good news' for the population was the 'bad news', namely the failures. The ultimate vent was the communication whose structure was "Have you heard of the last stupid thing/last failure.../what happened to us.../what Ceaușescu did to us?". Beyond the rationality of the strategy – any new failure is a step forward for the fall of the regime –, inevitably, a perverse emotional complex was contoured: the compensatory satisfaction for the failure that anesthetizes the frustration of inaction.

In the period of transition, the matrix generator of the collective experience was structurally modified. The impotency produced by a clear factor – the communist regime, with its powerful instruments of repression, sustained by the international system – was replaced by a confused configuration of forces difficult to identify and impossible to fight

¹³ Romanian popular ballad, the quintessence of peasant cultural spirit.

against. A new passivity was induced, generated by confuse factors against which one cannot fight. This passivity can no longer be accepted with feeling of helplessness, but rather with the one of guilt. Blaming the power, the secret sentiment of satisfaction towards its failures, becomes a means of detachment. The guilt that begins to work its way up into the conscience is diffusely transferred to all the actors. And the mass-media helps us in doing so, by continuously identifying guilty parties and the guilt proper in the area from the other side of the community, namely that of power. Among the responsible ones, the politicians that get rich by immoral businesses are constantly identified, who are incompetent, corrupt, former communists or Securitate members. Although used by the various political actors that are chronically placed in the opposition in order to justify their own impotency, the formulation of 'stolen revolution' is more profound and true than it is currently believed. It is an expression of the original sin of separating the collectivity from power, sending the former into a helpless passivity. The hope of participation was betrayed.

With the same function, the extremist nationalistic ideology appeared also: the national interest is not promoted; the traitors of the country – symmetrical with the egoists, the ones who became rich overnight, the corrupt – are responsible for the crisis of the actual society.

Inevitably, 'blaming the power' complementary involves the 'blaming/self-blaming of the collectivity'. The mass-media continuously broadcasts a message: not only the power, but also you, the collectivity, are the prisoners of the deforming history, incapable to understand and act in the right direct; you are Romanians, with all your flaws. It is a drama that reproduces in the modern society the motifs of the Antique tragedy and even surpasses them by the fact that it is produced at a national scale. The chorus of the public answers in an undertone voice and with misery: we, the mass, are... The collectivity itself assumes an ambiguous sentiment: the others are guilty, but we do not know very clearly who and what we can do; we are to blame too...

In this complex of guilt, an important source for the popularity of the mass-media can be identified: not necessarily the better understanding of the reality, the possibility of control over the government, but a compensatory instrument of helplessness. The image offered by the mass-media is a dramatization of the difficulties of transition, transforming them into moral culpabilities, a frame for a collective masochism. In the conditions where a real intervention does not work, satisfactory results are obtained through the blaming of 'the others' (theft, abuse, corruption), complementary to self-blaming.

The cost of self-soothing is the assuming of collective guilt.

It is not the mass-media that invented this national game. It was the result of a global state of mind, the complex product of the action of all the actors involved – and, firstly, of the political actors.

* * *

A few conclusions must be formulated.

In moments of crisis, when the collective anxiety reaches high levels, the Romanian has become one of the greatest mass-media consumers.

It can be estimated that the mass-media in Romania is presently in an important process of change of orientation and style. A rapid growth of the priority granted to the function

of stimulating frame for public debates on the fundamental political options and the directions of change is prefigured. Such a change of style is more and more clearly felt in the manner of relating to the government: a diminution of the critique founded on suspicion in principle with a selective support/critique.

Complementary, signs of irritation have appeared lately in the mass-media regarding some Occidental interventions, as well as reserves towards some components of the strategy of transition. It is predictable that a more accentuated realistic-critical stage will be entered into.

Chapter 8 Towards an Explicative Theory of Transition

A few elements of the constitution of a sociology of transition were already formulated in the previous chapters. The strategy of transition is a cognitive construct, as well as a social one, the result of the interaction of a large number of social actors, with their interests, perceptions and fears.

In the present chapter I will focus on two elements: on the one hand, the critical analysis of the strategy of transition, and on the other hand, on the identification of the collective explanation of difficulties and crises of transition as a social process. This explanation is a part of the ideology of transition, having an important role in the dynamics of the society.

During the last few years, a series of critiques against the strategy of transition began to take shape, including against the main international institutions that had a crucial part in its elaboration and implementation. The critical literature has multiplied rapidly and I am sure that it will continue to grow, up to a global critical evaluation of the strategy of transition and of the responsible actors. The present book does not intend to delve into a detailed analysis of these critiques, but simply to open up a perspective on their critical evaluation and the exploration of alternatives.

The Strategic Options as Explicative Factors of the Failures of Transition

1. *The revival of the neoliberalist spirit of the '80s in the strategy of transition.* The observation is formulated by Bob Deacon (1997) and others. The strategy of transition has expressed the spirit of a stage in the evolution of Occidental capitalism: the neoliberalism. The '80s were dominated by a neoliberal vision, illustrated at the time by important political personas, such as, for instance, Margaret Thatcher and Ronald Reagan, which now seem to us even verging on extremism. Europe was swept by a strong liberal gust of wind. Even Sweden, with its consolidated social-democratic tradition, had chosen, it is yet true that for a short period of time, a liberal government. Especially the International Monetary Fund, but also the 'vultures' from the World Bank (as the 'tough economists' were called by the adverse group from the same institution), advanced radical neoliberal precepts. It is clear that if such an option is inadequate for the countries in transition, it represents a topic worth debating. But such an analysis was strongly discouraged. During the last years, a change of attitude towards the neoliberal concepts is produced. Even the maladroit self-critique of the IMF is illustrative. In the rapport published this year, the IMF admits, for instance, that it

erred in essential issues of its policy towards Romania. It is a first step that we must encourage, although we expect a more global self-critique in what regards its policy towards the countries in transition. It is also necessary to find the answer to a question of crucial importance for the future evolution of some institutions of this type: who pays for the damages generated by the imposition of some wrong policies?

2. *The methods of support of the process of transition, used by the external actors.*

Complementary with the critiques against the strategic options, questions are beginning to be formulated regarding the methods and procedures used by the external actors in their support offered to the countries in transition. Often, the actors that held important positions in the orientation of the process of transition fell into the trap of some idealizing-moralizing stands. Frequently, the countries in transition were criticized for negative phenomena that can also be found in Western countries. Such critiques seem to be disproportionate when compared to the gravity of the problems that the countries in transition had to confront in a short period of time, full of difficulties and confusions. Various missionaries came to Romania, with the authority of the Occident, promoting, sometimes with an aggressive tone of voice, moralistic reforms that were not very successful in their own countries or did not seem to be a priority: usually, under the 'hat' of human rights, animal rights, extremist feminists etc.

What is even graver is that the Occidental institutions have deviated towards typically paternalist-authoritarian attitudes, using a combination of 'carrot and stick': money lending and certificates of good behavior conditioned by the adoption of some political decisions with very important effects, threats to block the access to Occidental structures, critiques that were often humiliating. The support for the transition granted by the Occidental actors often transformed into the blocking of the internal process of mental and institutional construction.

The adoption by the Occident of an accentuated active role in the orientation of transition had multiple effects. Yet complementary, a system characterized by a *diminished feedback* was produced: the Occidental actors, authors of the strategy of transition, have tended to engender a defensive attitude regarding the critical examination of the strategic options responsible for the modest successes or even failures of transition. A grave confusion of authority was produced: the internal political authority and the democratic participation versus the authority of the Occidental institutions and actors that, forever underlying the independence and complete responsibility of the countries in transition, have developed, actually, a strong control over the internal decisions, however un-doubled but the assuming of responsibility for the results of the adopted policies.

Most of the times, the relation among the external actors and the internal one was based on a type of negotiation where the parts are sensibly unequal as power. The results of such negotiations were constantly in favor of the Occidental parts, with a certain variation as to the degree of power of the internal actors. As to this matter, the following *hypothesis* can be formulated: *the more accentuated the political weakness, the internal conflictory state and confusion, the less powerful the negotiation with the Occidental institutions, the external intervention being*

more efficient and having, on its turn, more accentuated disorganizing effects; and vice versa, the higher the internal political cohesion, the capacity of the internal political factors to interact in a constructive manner and to coagulate around the national interests, the stronger their capacity of negotiation with the external factors, the internal options benefiting from a higher degree of coherence and power to promote the change.

The low consistency of the internal political processes had fractured the key-element of the success of transition, namely the constructive dialogue with the external actors. On their turn, the unbalances from this dialogue had as effect the delay of the coagulation of the internal political processes. In this context, it was possible for the external actors to launch some strategic orientations and social topics that were not filtered through the constructive and corrective interaction of the internal actors.

3. *The retreat of the state from the restructuring and the re-launch of the economy.*

The fundamental orientation of the strategy of transition was the assault against the role of the state, especially in the economy, but also in the other sectors of the social life. A central principle of neoliberalism is revived here, formulated by Margaret Thatcher: *the state is not the solution to the problems of the actual society, but the very problem.* The retreat of the state, from the majority of the functions of coordination and control of the economy, as well as of providing well-being, was considered in the first stage as being the obligatory condition of a successful transition.

In the presidential elections of 2000, the slogan of Theodor Stolojan was 'economy before politics', which was in other words the current principle within the international institutions at the time: *economic driven society*. The slogan presents an incontestable truth: the reform of the economy constitutes the core of social change. In its simplified form, it proved to be a source of economic failures: the construction of a new economy is not possible without the regulating intervention of the state. In reality, on the short term, *the politics* were, inevitably, the key-element of transition. Its incoherence, the confused combination of intervention/non-intervention, the uncritical adoption of some decisions, the programming of the sequences of change were the main source to the problems of transition.

I shall provide a few examples of subtraction of the role of the state with disastrous effects. One of the principles that dominated the transition from the beginning was the one of rapid passing from the control of the communist state, where the law was just a subordinated principle, to a 'state of law'. The primitive approach, without paying the necessary attention to the constitution of a sufficiently elaborated institutional system, in the conditions of a severely limited capacity of control, is responsible for the fact that justice was poorly efficient and very vulnerable to corruption. Hence the explanation for the reason the major economic scams of transition were 'washed clean' by justice. The disappearance of the great Romanian fleet is a paradigmatic case. It was, obviously, 'stolen', but it very well might be that the authors would be declared not guilty from the point

of view of the confuse legislation of the time, they being thus exonerated of any responsibility.

During the first part of transition, the political forces of opposition have continuously pressed upon for the diminishing of the government authority. Important institutions in the realization of the programs of transition were passed from under the authority of the government in the subordination of the parliament, which proved to not have the capacity of efficiently exerting the necessary control and orientation, or in the area of responsibility of the 'civil society', which ultimately proved to be fictitious as it could be politically manipulated. The government of the first seven years of transition was always subjected to the suspicion that it is dominated by an insufficiently radical technocracy, accused of having a communist mentality, being inclined to sustain the excessive intervention of the state. A significant case is represented by the fight for the position of the *Fund of State Property* (FSP, FPS in Romanian). This organism was projected to have an essential role in the administration and privatization of the enterprises that were state property. In order for it to not become an instrument of the government to be used against the opposition, it was placed under the authority of the parliament, which proved to create a void of authority, with enormous destructive effects and make it permeable to corruption. The attempt of the SDPR, during its term, to subject it under the more efficient control of the government, came against a fierce resistance from the opposition. The new government, formed by the former opposition, immediately placed the FSP in the subordination of the government.

In Romania, retreat of the state seems to have been the most accentuated in comparison to the other countries in transition. The clearest indicator of the retreat of the state from the functioning of all the spheres of society is represented by the public expenses as a percent of GDP. Romania is the country with the lowest level of budgetary expenses after Lithuania and Moldavia.

It is necessary to be cautious in drawing definite conclusions from these data. It is however clear that, beyond the acceptance of the neoliberal bible, there are not complex analyses of the effects of the level of budgeting on the functioning of the society, especially in the period of transition. The neoliberalist dogma, according to which a low budget stimulated the growth of economy, did not obtain a confirmation of the medium and long term. On the other hand, a reduced budget does not provide the possibility of a policy of economic re-launch or the reduction of social costs.

	1990	2002
Czech Republic	60.1	47.8
Hungary	57.5	53.5
Poland	39.8	45.7
Slovakia	60.1	50.2
Slovenia	49.6	43.5
Estonia	32.8	39.2
Latvia	44.0	37.5
Lithuania	49.2	29.3

Bulgaria	65.9	38.9
Romania	39.3	33.6
Bosnia-Herzegovina	39.3 (1995)	55.0
Croatia	39.0 (1991)	51.5
FRY Macedonia	40.4 (1991)	37.8
Serbia and Montenegro		48.7
Belarus	43.9 (1991)	42.0
Moldova	24.7 (1991)	31.5
Russia	58.4 (1992)	37.0
Ukraine	31.4	36.6 (2001)

Table 8.1. The total budgetary expenses.

To the neoliberal spirit, I would add yet another probable source for the obsession of the retreat of the state: the visceral fear of the Occident regarding the role of the state in the former socialist countries, perceived as a possible risk in using its power in the reorientation of transition towards a new international alliance around Russia, based on an indefinite type of neo-communism and, consequently, the reproduction of the splitting of the Occidental world.

The role of the state represented a topic of sharp ideological debate during the first years of transition. The official ideology, strongly sustained by the occidental actors, was focused on the accusation that the promotion of the active role of the state represents a communist reflex; the individual, through his own effort, and the ensemble of individuals, through the market mechanisms, are the only producers of well-being. Contrary to the official ideology, the collectivity expected the state to assume more responsibility in all the areas of social life, including the economy (*The Barometer of Public Opinion*, 2003): 76% – the state must assume the responsibility for the socio-economic process *versus* 15% who consider that this is not recommendable. The sectors, which the population considers that the state must *firstly assume responsibility for*, again contrary to the official ideology, are, in order of preferences: ensuring income (26%), work places (25%), social involvement (17%). The active role of the state in the control of state enterprises should grow, affirms 48%, whereas 26% believe that the latter should be granted more liberty of movement. The state should get more involved in the social support of the poor: 51% totally agree, 37% rather agree and 10% do not really agree or do not agree at all.

Lately I have the impression that more and more arguments are accumulating in the view that the retreat of the state represented an important source for the multiple crises and the enormous cost of changes in economy, as well as other areas of social life.

If we analyze comparatively the performances of transition, we notice that the states that have better succeed from an economic and social point of view are the ones that did not apply the precepts of IMF. An evaluation made by the World Bank at 10 years of transition (2002) reaches some conclusions that are formulated for the first time, yet not thoroughly developed. The economy of countries in transition has known a real crash. The most appreciable successes we

find, surprisingly, in the countries that have maintained a strong implication of the state in the economy: China has experienced a spectacular economic growth in the last 15-20 years, but also Vietnam that, after the communist North had won the war, oriented the new Vietnam towards a rapid process of economic and political change. The key-element of the success of these changes is not the 'maintenance of the political dominion of communism', but strong implication of the state in the processes of promotion of market economy and economic growth. Another case commented in the Rapport of the World Bank is Belarus. If the former republics from the Soviet Union have known economic crash, the process of re-adaptation to the new crumbling situation of the area proved to take place in Belarus, country estimated to be the less reformed.

4. *The restructuring of the economy through the rapid and complete introduction of the mechanisms of market economy and privatization.* From the beginning, the strategy of transition granted the state a limited role in the economy: the creation of a legal and institutional frame for market economy and the quasi-total privatization of economy. For the restructuring and re-launch of the economy, two mechanisms were counted on: the introduction at once of the mechanisms of market economy as sole regulator and complete privatization. As such, the state renounced its attempt to develop a policy of restructuring and re-launch of the economy, as it was considered to be rather counterproductive.

The market, through its mechanisms, was to ensure the normal functioning of enterprises, sustained their healthy development. The mechanisms of market economy are capable of regulating the economy sufficiently well, even if it is in its greater part state property, and to ensure at the same time a rapid economic re-launch. The wager or the miraculous capacity of the spontaneous forces of the market paralyzed, actually, the development of a strategy of re-launch of the economy. Privatization was to provide an increase of the internal control within enterprises and to motivate growth. The danger to a successful transition was considered to *be too much state, not too little*.

Regarding this strategic option, considered in the first stage of transition as a principle beyond any doubt, more and more critiques have begun to accumulate. Maybe the most devastating critique of the policy of IMF, based on this principle, was formulated by Stiglitz, the former chief economist of the World Bank (2002). Regarding this strategy, the main social-political groups (the technocracy and its political representatives, the historical parties, the salaried people represented by labor unions) have had rather similar attitudes.

The technocracy has sustained this program out of its own reasons. It was especially interested in the complete liberation of the enterprises from state control, in the granting of a quasi-total freedom to the managers of the enterprises, which, inevitably, could not be accomplished but through a market economy. It also hoped that the state would provide the necessary capital for their restructuring and re-launch, as well as the financial support for the survival in the process of restructuring.

Yet this was the *poisoned gift* offered by the technocrats to the society. The mechanisms of administration of the state enterprises were replaced with quasi-

private ones, invested with a practically absolute power. The managers of these enterprises found themselves in the situation of acting in an absolutely free managerial environment, without control and responsibilities, with lax budgetary constraints. Such a policy, paradoxically, generated a profound crisis of the state economy. In spite of the initial good intentions, the managers found themselves pushed into the situation of being interested more in the destructive exploitation of the resources of state enterprises than in their restructuring and re-launch. The independence of state enterprises, complementary to the weakening of control over them, generated corruption, inefficiency, counterproductive management. Started on this downward slope, the financial support of the state proved to be a source of corruption and bankruptcy of the enterprises. The state industrial units quickly became 'black holes' of the economy not because the state is a bad manager, but because it retreated from the function of administration in favor of a system of management that proved to be catastrophic.

The failure in the administration of state enterprises made their flawed privatization or even closing down to become often a better solution than their maintenance and restructuring. Privatization gradually became a means of getting rid of the state property economy or more likely than of converting it into an efficient market economy.

In the conditions that the intention of placing on healthy bases the management of state enterprises was completely abandoned, it is understandable that the Occident insisted on an extreme strategy: *the total and rapid privatization*. Such an option is, in itself, difficult to justify. Even in the Occident there are large sectors that are state property. They were maintained all throughout the post-war period and are not completely privatized even now. In Romania, *the total and rapid privatization* became a dogma that no one dared to question publicly. The program 'privatization even for a dollar' expressed an option of principle. The essential argument was the necessity of eliminating the areas of inefficiency, which absorb budgetary resources. This was correct. However, the problem of reforming the areas of state economy so that they would become efficient, as it happens in many Occidental countries, was never raised. The IMF and World Bank constantly introduced in their conditionality the acceleration of privatization. Significant economic lending was offered for privatization, due to which some privatizations became even more costly than non-privatization.

The insistence of the Occident on the rapid privatization represented an option with contradictory effects on the economic reforms. The program of rapid privatization, beyond the theoretical arguments, came against two structural problems in Romania. The internal sources of privatization were at the beginning, practically, inexistent. Nor were the external sources sufficient. The availabilities for privatization of the Occident, as it was natural, were absorbed with priority by the countries closer to its borders. The enormous external pressure for the acceleration of privatization tended to generate privatization of poor quality, which accentuated the fall of the economy.

The managers became more and more interested in the acquisition of enterprises rather than their restructuring and re-launch. The lack of capital made the managerial technocracy incapable of buying, through privatization, the

enterprises and, even more so, unable to invest in their restructuring and development. It was natural, sometimes, for the technocratic management to become interested in the non-privatization of enterprises, to which they could not participate.

Unlike the technocracy, the members of the former classes dissolved by communism, concentrated into the historical parties, were unconditionally interested in rapid privatization. Uninterested in the technocratic logic of the restructuring of state economy, they were inclined towards the vision of a 'pure' capitalism, constituted through the very own forces of the private economy. The incapacity to administer a complex modern, yet ill, economy, made the historical parties prefer the destruction of state economy through privatization rather than its restructuring by the technocratic management.

The salariat, represented by labor unions, have sustained, in principle, the program of privatization. Yet the process of privatization in itself was inevitably subjected to social debates. The salaried people, the most affected by destructive privatizations, in contrast with the government who was interested in privatization, regardless of the means of costs, have often exerted strong pressures for the governmental intervention in the processes of privatization, many times in order to reinstate lawfulness and the observation of the clauses written into the contracts of privatization, including for the annulment of the clearly destructive privatizations. It is true that, in the process of negotiating with the state, in the acquisition prices there were also a series of social conditions: the non-dismissal of the salaried people, or their dismissal with compensations. Now, at the end of the process, it can be estimated that many times, the fears of the salaried people were justified. The slogan 'We do not sell our country', to which many Occidental actors had a disproportionate negative reaction, must be understood as an expression of such an anxiety. The passing from an enterprise that, at least politically, represented a responsible social actor to an enterprise taken over by someone who had no social responsibility, safe for the personal economic interest could not fail to produce justified fears.

5. *The support of a minimalist social policy, in conformity with the neoliberal percepts.* The deficit of intervention of the state in the economy was doubled in Romania by a deficit of social policy, in all its segments, in what regards the social financial support for the groups with a high vulnerability, as well as in the area of fundamental social services: education, health, social work. From this point of view, Romania had a different orientation from the one of the other European countries in transition. And the starting point was different also.

The communist system, in contrast with capitalism, had accentuated the intervention of the state not only in economy, but also in social protection. And, indeed, the majority of socialist countries were characterized by a level of public social expenses higher than in the capitalist countries, *placed at the same level of economic development*, if not even higher than in the prosperous capitalist countries. Romania was the exception: the level of public social expenses was substantially lower than the one of the other European socialist countries. Ceaușescu's regime granted an absolute priority to the economy, up to an

irrational paranoia of economic growth. During the last years, confronting with a chronic crisis, the communist regime managed for a period of time to keep the economy on an ascending curve, nurturing it with financial resources taken from the social area.

It was to be expected that the restructuring of the economy would produce a disastrous effect on the standard of life of the population. The other European countries in transition tended to carry out, in order to compensate at least partially the effects of impoverishment, a compensatory social policy, providing a more accentuated social support (Zamfir, 1993, 1994, 1999). In a period of explosive poverty, Romania carried out an opposite policy, being, from the point of view of the budgetary effort, at the lowest level in Europe.

	1989	1999
Romania	14.2	18.4
EU – 15	25.4	27.6
Bulgaria	20.3	21.2
Hungary	22.5	23.5
Czech republic	21.5	24.8 (1998)

Table 8.2. The public social expenses as % of GDP: Romanian compared to other European countries.

After a substantial growth in the first year of transition (1990), especially under the pressure of the expectations of the Revolution, in the next 10 years (1991-2000) the public social expenses as percent of BDP have grown only with 0.6 percental points (from 16,6 in 1990 to 17,2 in 2000). Such an increase is extremely modest in the conditions of an explosion of social problems, representing, actually, a decrease in real terms, because of the severe diminution of GDP. The result was a more accentuated degradation of the conditions of life of the collectivity. Romania was placed, from this point of view, at a sensible distance from the EU countries, but also from the other countries in transition. *The National Plan of Antipoverty and Promotion of Social Inclusion*, adopted in 1993, stipulates an increase close to the level of 25% of the EU in approximately 7-9 years.

It is only in 2001 that a substantial increase in the public social expenses was produced: of 2.2 percents in 2004 as to 2000.

1989	14.2	1997	15.9
1990	16.6	1998	17.3
1991	17.0	1999	18.4
1992	16.5	2000	17.2
1993	15.2	2001	18.2
1994	15.5	2002	18.1
1995	16.0	2003	18.4
1996	15.7	2004	19.4

Table 8.3. Romania: public social expenses. Source: ICCV on the basis of data from IMC

The explanation for the marginalization of social support in Romania in the period of transition must be looked for in the domination of a liberalist ideological orientation shared by all the political forces. Contrary to the policy from the other countries in transition and even more so to the practices from the Occidental countries, it was considered that social protection in Romania is excessive. In all areas, when compared to the explosion of poverty and process of social disaggregation, there was a decrease of social protection: firstly of the children (the erosion of the child allowances from approximately 10% of the medium wages to 3-4%, the reduction of financial support of kindergartens and especially nurseries); the delay with more than a decade of the introduction of guaranteed minimum wages; the pensioners were slightly more protected, due to their political importance, but also due to a moral work sustained by the whole community. Nor did the public services sufficiently ameliorate their situation, although some betterment did occur: the growth of public expenses in this area was modest compared to the massive inherited under-financing.

The impoverishment of the population was considered from the moment it began to be officially acknowledged as an inevitable social cost, which must be taken as such. Instead of socially supporting the impoverished ones, the government rather tried to convince them that their situation is a part of the strategy of transition: thus they should embrace the idea of 'tightening the belt'. The only concern of the policy of transition referred to the *social supportability* of the process of economic reforms. In order to avoid the social movement that would threaten the reform, a policy of 'tighten/loosen' was promoted also in the area of social policy. In certain moments, a policy of excessive austerity was enforced, alternated with the taking of some measures of social protection in order to counteract the social movements presented as being a threat to transition. The IMF and World Bank have promoted from the beginning a minimalist strategy in this areas: the ensuring of a very low minimum, of survival for the poorest of the poorest (it is the spirit of the *White Charta of Social Work*, elaborated by a group of expert of the World Bank in 1993), by the severe focalization of all the forms of social support, with the sacrifice of the middle class and especially of the lower middle class, of all those who lived in poverty, but not in misery. The social policy was 'generous' only as an instrument for obtaining the agreement for mass dismissals, through compensatory payments, which, in fact, pushed the people in question into a hopeless poverty.

An important component of the ideology of the retreat of the state from the policy of social support was the accent put by the Occident on the taking over of the functions of social protection by the economy, and, where this does not succeed in a satisfying manner, by the civil society. Especially the government of 1997-2000 was characterized by the mythology of shifting responsibility to the civil society – especially of NGOs – for the providing of social support. Even today, a very important political leader declared that it is not the job of the state to help the poor, but more so of the Church.

The mythology of the civil society has paralyzed the direct partnership between the public administration and the community, the place of the varied forms of participation of the community being taken by nongovernmental organizations strongly motivated by the access to the resources made available by the Occident. From a social point of view, the strategy of transition in Romania can be characterized as being minimalist, as a consequence. The accent was placed not on economic re-launch, but on privatization and restructuring even with the price of economic fall.

6. *The deficit of ensuring the rights and security of the individual.* The combination of two ideological options – the mythology of the intervention of the ‘civil society’ and of regulation through free market, with the marginal intervention of the state in ‘social control’ – had disastrous effects for the protection of the citizen.

The new value of freedom quickly became a justifying ideology for the toleration of abuse, scams and corruption to which the population fell prey.

The rapid and excessive replacement of the mechanisms of control specific to the communist regime, where the politics had a key-role, with another type of control, based on the state of law, on the rule of the law, created a void of control on an excessively long period of time, therefore producing disgregative effects difficult to reabsorb. The deficit of control of the mechanisms of control was added. A balanced and efficient system must answer the question: who controls that controller? The high autonomy creates a *spirit of body*, fueling the generating of lack of control in a generalized system of corruption.

The functioning of the public institutions of control – the justice and the police – constituted an important component of the global crisis of the Romanian society in transition. The penetration of the se institution by the individual as well as group interests, but especially the ones of the mafia-like organizations, produced significant processes of corruption, abuse on the population and has negatively affected the functioning of the collectivity.

7. *Absolute priority granted to the policy of reparation in contrast to the actual protection of the collectivity and the orientation of resources towards development.* The strategy of transition was concentrated in its initial stage on the construction of the future: the ways of changing the communist society into a modern capitalist one, of the Occidental type. The matter of making amends to the injustices of the former regime was contained in this strategy only in a marginal position, with the label of rather an exception. Ulteriorly, due to strong pressures of the interest groups, often sustained by Occidental actors, the matter of ‘amends’ has become a priority, *chaotically and counterproductively managed*, with unexplored effects on other segments of the population and even less explored ones on the whole process of development. The great injustices produced by the communist regime against the mass of the population remained poorly defined and, practically, not taken into consideration, with small exceptions. Only some injustices were the object of a policy of reparation. This

took place in two waves, with political support and different manners of administration.

The first wave of amends: the recompensating of recent injustices that the entire population suffered from, but especially the class of the salariat. The regime had produced severe injustices to the population, in extremely different forms: the limiting of the right of circulation, violating the labor legislation, not granting salary rights, unpaid work etc. Two types of amends, with distinct objectives and political attitudes, can be identified:

- a) *collective reparations*: a general consensus was created around some political decisions that had as effect the rapid correction of some frustrating situations – the suspension of food exports and their orientation towards the internal consumption; the opening of consumer goods imports; the strict observation of the rights of the salariat, such as, for instance, the payment of extra time; the reduction of the working week; the right of circulation of all citizens outside borders, annulment of restrictions to move from the city to another within the country. Some measures were verging on populism, but were largely accepted: the employment in 1990 in the state enterprises of all those who did not have a work place; the selling to the population, in conditions that were excessively to the latter's advantage, of the houses/buildings that were state property; the restitution of the famous 'social parts' (forced contributions of the salaried people to the capitalization of enterprises);
- b) *the cycle of punctual and sectorial reparations*: the emergence, even from the first days after the Revolution, of labor unions opened a process of claiming regarding 'the reparation of the injustices of the past'. Due to the weakness of the government, in the first half of the year 1990 a chain of claims was set *in avalanches*: a claim satisfied for one group engendered a feeling of frustration for the other segments of the salaried population, converted into new claims. A dangerous vicious circle of the escalation of claims encompassed everything: some satisfied claims/other raised claims. Many of these claims could have been justified, but they threatened to set the whole economy on fire. In addition, a procedure of regulation completely opposed to the one of an organized society had been initiated: pressures on the government produced chaotically from a huge number of labor unions, whose representativeness was not clear at all.

The problem of these reparations does not lie in their proper justification, but in the financial effects. Initially, the state had some financial resources that were rapidly gone instead of being diffused on global criteria to the entire population or used for development. After the depletion of these reserves, they were supported by the entire population, through the reduction of social programs, and, the worst of all, through inflation.

After the installment of the new government as a result of the first elections of May 1990, on the basis of a general consensus where the unions themselves had a constructive position, a *moratorium* was enforced on all claims. Through extended consultations with the unions, a new system of labor rights was instituted, which would create an equitable

and balanced approach regarding the real state of the economy and with its perspectives of development. The moratorium was focused on the creation of new legal engagements for the future, renouncing the reparations for the past. A new national consensus was instituted: it is counterproductive to identify all the injustices of the past. They are multiple and the whole population lost something one way or the other. The new consensus was oriented towards the future and the wiping clean of responsibilities, the reparation of the injustices of the past.

Two types of systems of reparations remained. Firstly, the compensation of all those who suffered condemnations out of political reasons. The compensatory rights granted to them are relatively modest. Secondly, a system of compensation/award giving to the group of 'revolutionaries' boomed. The victims of the Revolution received modest compensations when compared to the losses they had suffered. In exchange, the awards given to the 'revolutionaries', whose number was in a frustrating growth through the commerce with revolutionary titles, represented a disappointing policy. The granting of some very attractive benefits was to create a privileged class, the entries being forced by fraud and thus very difficult to control.

Many social categories did not receive any compensation. It is the case of the peasantry dispossessed not only of land, but also of the means to work, who received only the property of the land from the collective agricultural farms, being completely devoid of the means to work it. The peasants lost also because of a uncontrolled process of liquidation of the CAF (collective agricultural farms, CAP in Romanian), whose results amounted to important destructions. The most illustrative example is the quasi-total destruction of the system of irrigations.

The collective feeling of the necessity of 'wiping out clean' a past full of confuse debts that the entire collectivity had to pay, in order to make room for the re-launch of a future based on new principles, appeared to have been consolidated. Alas, it was an illusion. History did not want to walk this way.

A second wave of reparations had as object the restitution of the properties nationalized at the beginning of the communist regime. This process was triggered later on, after the quenching of the claims for recent injustices. These claims were sustained by social forces different from the ones of the first wave of claims: the historical parties now back on the political arena, small groups of former owner and, interesting, by external political forces. In itself, the pressure of the segment of former owners was not important enough to impose measure of retrocedence of property, especially since it could adversely affect the interests of a much larger segment of the population. The intervention of the external political forces in this matter, taking advantage of the will of Romania to integrate in the Western world, had, it seems, a rather disciplining character than a principled one. The communist project, through its very fundament, the nationalization of property, had to be stigmatized.

The matter was completely separated from its connection to the other components of the strategy of social change, not being publicly debated not from the point of view of a moral and juridical abstract 'must', and not from a more global, socio-economic one. The governments gradually gave in to these pressures, not so much because they believed it to be a matter sustained a significant mass of the collectivity, but more likely under the external pressure.

The fundamental principle invoked was a strictly juridical one: the guarantee of private property, in the conditions where other types of losses and injustices produced by the communist regime were not codified from a juridical point of view. A supplementary matter of principle was the one of the historical time. The juridical logic does not operate in an excessively long period of time, because over an injustice made in the past, complex social arrangements settle, whose reparation produced far greater injustices.

The adopted form of retrocedence was its passing over to justice, but without a sufficient regulation. In these conditions, the justice began to function in a situation of unbalance of power between those who solicited property and those that that particular property was to be taken from. This unbalance of interests and financial support of juridical representation constituted one of the most important sources of corruption in the system of public administration (in its quality of owner) and in the juridical system. Those who claimed the properties held, through the properties that were to be restored, important financial resources. Around this opportunity offered by the law and the potential financial resources, a real industry of recuperating property was created, quite often on fabricated grounds. The corruption of justice and of the public system represented a perverse effect of the policy of the retrocedence of property. The representatives of public institutions were easily convinced to 'not earnestly' defend the public interest in the development of litigations. Moreover, especially with the government of 1997-2000, the political orientation was: everything must be retroceded. The judges themselves were subjected o political pressures and financial temptations in order to accept the retrocedence, often in the conditions of insufficient evidence or even on the basis of obviously falsified documents. It is impossible to estimate the volume of un-grounded court rulings. Intuitively, it is quite large. At the other pole, the individual losers of retrocedence, the tenants of the disputed houses, were, usually, too poor to be fairly represented in the juridical system and demoralized under the global political pressure that gave them no change to win. The juridical process of retrocedence was clearly undermined by corruption and political pressure.

The first attempt of retrocedence of property referred to the nationalized industrial properties. Such an objective was abandoned due to the insurmountable difficulties. The enterprises nationalized at the end of the '40s no longer existed. They had been restructured and developed as a result of the massive investments of the last 50 years, fact which rendered the idea of retrocedence absurd. This could not even be considered an efficient manner of privatization. The reason of privatization is to produce the modernization of management and to stimulate investments. The retrocedence of enterprises could not ensure such an objective.

The second direction of retrocedence had as objective the buildings. After many hesitations and confuse regulations, gradually the most radical form possible was reached: *restitutio in integrum*. If the retrocedence of the buildings that had not suffered, usually, important modification was possible, it raised a multitude of other problems that were, practically, ignored. The most difficult problem was the fate of poor tenants, incapable of buying/renting a new household. The problem remained without solution, due to a lack of stock – social houses. Many of the tenants were simply thrown into the street. Yet the most serious problem is that of social equity. I believe that the restitution, the most radical in Romania when compared to the other European countries in transition, created a moral and social unbalance: on the one hand, the rapport between the 'losses'

suffered by the population and the amends. The losses suffered by the population due to the policy of the communist regime were extremely diversified, practically, difficult to identify and probate. From among these, only one type of loss was selected – the nationalization of buildings. The others, which had suffered other types of loss, were not compensated, but, as members of the collectivity, they had to contribute, from the actual and future earnings, without having any guilt whatsoever, for the compensation of what could not be retroceded and in order to support the poor losers.

Especially those to whom the communist regime did not give the opportunity of building houses or of buying the state property apartments that they lived in, to extremely advantageous prices, fell victim. Those that paid rent in the retroceded buildings (and, aside from a segment who held sufficient resources in order to buy another house, the great majority was counted among the poor) became the innocent collateral victims of a policy that they did not endorse.

The retrocedence of property involves very costly public social expenses that are supported by the actual generation and by the future ones. Between 2005-2015, the Romanian state must pay 8.8 billion dollars compensation to the proprietors of the nationalized buildings that cannot be restored as it is. To this, the support for the tenants that are about to be evicted of the buildings must be added. All these add to the already paid sums. The future costs are predicted to be covered by the entire population: 25% of the taxes on the second building in property (measure against property – the actual owners cover the damages of the former owners); 25% from the selling of state property buildings; 5% of the RCB (Romanian Commercial Bank, BCR in Romanian) profit (project of law for the application of Law 10/2001 – *Capital*, issue 50, December 2003). A fundamental principle is thus violated: the reparations of injustices must not be supported by the innocent population and nor must it adversely affect the economic and social re-launch of the country.

Due to the strong political pressures, the exploration of alternatives was inhibited: *the collective sharing of the costs of socialism and the reinstating of property rights as basis for social reconstruction*. The problem of retrocedence of property was completely separated from the one of the program of socio-economic development and the reparation of other injustices, without taking into consideration the social and economic costs.

To summarize, the pro and con arguments regarding the retrocedence of building property are the following:

- *pro arguments:*
 - the inviolateness of property;
 - the retrocedence of property must be regarded as a natural and moral instrument of privatization;
 - the most simple solution of privatization is its retrocedence to the former owners;
- *con arguments:*
 - the choice of only recompensating for the nationalization of property represents an inequitable sharing of the costs of communism. An absolute priority was granted, never explicitly, to this problem: here lays the greatest crime of the communist regime. In fact, there were also other 'crimes', far greater, which cannot be repaired: the violation of human rights, the ban on accumulating property (principle that is just as important

as the one of the violation of property rights). Thus, a prioritization by omission was produced;

- a moral problem is opened: the social and economic costs of the retrocedence are supported by the actual population, and not by the guilty party. Those that receive the nationalized property are the absolute winners of transition, the others having to, directly or indirectly, as tax payers, pay for the retrocedence. Moreover, those that the property was retrieved to also received, for a more than symbolical price, the house/apartment that they themselves were tenants;
- complex negative effects: the adverse effect on the economic re-launch, the forceful push into extreme poverty and desperation of many of the tenants from the retroceded buildings, the negative effect on social solidarity and cohesion, the engendering of one of the most important sources of corruption.

Initially, the consideration of a variety of alternative options in this matter was possible, but which however were not examined in a global and democratic manner:

- a) the 'wiping out clean' of all injustices as an equitable position for the entire community and the concentration on the reconstruction of the Romanian society, with the correct and equitable utilization of all the resources accumulated in various ways by the communist regime;
- b) the compensation in money or in kind, in a moderate manner, complementary to fair prices for the buying of nationalized houses, taking into account the real value of the estates: there were inequitable procedures in this matter – the selling of nationalized buildings a, practically, more than symbolical prices, regardless of their value;
- c) the retrieval of the houses, *in integrum*, but with the close watch of the correctness and social protection of the tenants through the using of the money obtained from the state selling of the buildings for the construction of some social houses, which was never accomplished.

The hesitant and confuse approach of the problem, stretched on more than 14 years, was responsible for results difficult to imagine as more catastrophic: the sacrifice of most of the tenants, pushed into a prolonged agony that will end with their eviction into the street, and for the collectivity, immense costs to pay for the present and the future. To this, the perverse effects on the difficult process of constituting a democracy based on dialogue and the consolidation of consensus were added. The democratic discussion were overshadowed by aggressive ideological pressures: from the invocation of some supposed requirements of the Occident to debatable abstract juridical principles presented in an oppressive or mythological manner, with the inhibition of any discussions under the threat of being labeled as communist mentalities.

Elements for the Construction of a Theory of Transition

The Principle of Structural Pluralism

A Simplistic Paradigm of the Economy of Transition

It becomes more and more obvious that an adequate conceptualization of the type of economy in the period of transition is missing.

The current explicative paradigm is based on *the principle of structural uniqueness* and on *a simplistic evolutionism*. The economy, as it exists at a given time, represents a point in the continuum of the process of evolution, with more communist economy or more market economy. There are also methodologies utilized by some international organizations in order to identify the point occupied by an economy in this continuum of transition: the proportion of private enterprises, the adopted regulations specific to market economy etc.

The model of the two structures that are supposed to be gradually replacing one another is more likely a false one than a true one. The economy in transition is not a market economy in a linear process of constitution, as a result of the dissolving of the command economy. The multitude of the disaggregative and aberrant economic processes of transition cannot be accounted for merely as imperfections of the new economy of the Occidental type within the process of constitution or as persistency of the communist economy. There are economic phenomena that cannot be accounted for by either of the two structures. Even from the first years of transition (1990-1991), the real economy has substantially parted with the communist economy: the system of planning and control of the state was eliminated; the prices were liberalized in a large measure; the state enterprises received the status of quasi-complete independence, acting in an imperfect and poorly regulated free market. As a consequence, they ceased to behave as the enterprises from the communist system. On their turn, the newly-emerged private enterprises act on a confused market, where the main partners/competitors are not the capitalist enterprises, with which they could engage in a competition/collaboration of the capitalist type, but vulnerable state enterprises that could be exploited.

In order to designate this state of transition of the economy, the Occidental political institutions have introduced in the last 2-3 years a new concept: *non-functional market economy*. The predominantly private market economy has already been accomplished, yet it still functions insufficiently efficiently.

The formulation 'non-functional market economy' is based, on a more attentive analysis, on the schema of a simplistic evolutionism. In fact, it is not the question of a market economy that does not yet function satisfactorily, but of *an economy that functions distortedly*. The utilization of the schema – 'stage of implementation of the new model' in the explanation of the actual economy only leads to superficial banalities. Much more productive is the identification of the distinct structures generated by the various strategic options.

The label of 'still non-functional market economy' tacitly comprises an ideological position. The strategy of the economy reform is good. Ultimately, the key-variable is the *political will* to promote the reform. The economic difficulties represent the inevitable effect of a stage in the complex process of transformation of the economic system, aggravated by the flaws of the political class (incompetence + corruption), but also of the population, which still has an inadequate mentality for the efficient functioning of market economy.

The Theory of the Double Structural Tendency: 'Normal' Market Economy and 'Predatory' Economy

Classic Sociology, having as object relatively well structured societies, has tended to consider that is a *system is characterized by a single structure*. Each social system has a structure that is crystallized into norms, rules, behavioral models, institutions. In the case of societies in transition, the strategy of change represents the normative core of the structure, which is to be built in time, pushing the social reality into a certain *structural direction*.

However, a complex social system is not characterized by a single structure, but by two or more structuring tendencies that counteract or support one another. It is what I have elsewhere called *the principle of structural pluralism* (Zamfir, 1999). The taking into consideration of only one structure, leaves un-accounted for a multitude of phenomena that represent products of other structuring tendencies.

In a society at change, the structural pluralism is much more obvious. The economy of our society in the process of transition offers a typical example for the insufficiency of the single structure perspective and the explanatory superior capacity of the principle of structural pluralism.

For the more adequate description of the economy of transition, I believe that another paradigm should be constructed, composed of many structures that have melded:

- a poorly regulated state property economy, lacking the control of the owner, functioning on a free market for which it did not have the capacity, or the necessary discipline, subjected to continuous exploitation from the other economic agents, as well as from its own managers;
- an emergent market economy, in the process of organization and institutionalization, only partially functional;
- a new capitalist economy that functions in a confuse and poorly regulated market economy, parasitizing the state property economy and the budgetary resources of the state by fraud.

The first decade of transition in Romania offers the image of a combination between the almost complete restructuring of property and the introduction of the rules of market economy, on the one hand, and the difficulties of institutionalization/control of the functioning of the market economy. Aside from privatization and the producing of the legal basis for the functioning of market economy, the intervention of the state in the regulation of economic relation and in the support of economic re-launch can be estimates as being confuse and insufficient.

The strategy of constituting the market economy in the countries in transition contains a large set of options, responsible for the successes and failures of the process. The promotion of market economy without a sufficient institutionalization generated a distorted economic system that was not similar, in any stage of its evolution, to the stages covered by Western capitalism.

The presupposition that the market mechanisms are capable of restructuring the economy and ensure its re-launch in the conditions of a deficit of institutionalization, uncompensated by the intervention of the state in the control of the economic processes and in the support of economic re-launch, proved to be naïve (Stiglitz, 2003). To this,

other presuppositions are added, which have proved to be responsible for the aberrant processes of the economy: the rapid liberalization of the market, including of the area dominated by state enterprises, granting them a quasi-independent status, with a very weak control from the state as owner; rapid and total privatization, the choice for privatization at all costs, including the high risk of the destruction of privatized enterprises and the one of corruption. The level of corruption probably reached its peak during the first part of transition, being the result of a privatization realized through a poorly efficient bureaucratic procedure, of some priorities that proved to be faulty and of a lack of sufficient control.

A formulation that designates more clearly a shocking characteristic of the economy of transition is the one of *predatory economy*. This syntagm is not a mere epithet, but it designates a distinct structure: *an economy where the profits are obtained not by performance, but by the 'plundering' of the resources of state property, of the budget and of the mass of consumers*. It presents itself as a 'social manner of production' with its own structural logic: a manner of producing profit that uses the mechanisms of free market, but insufficiently regulated, fundamentally different from the one of competitive capitalism. The predatory economy was constituted on the basis of the opportunities of exploitation offered by the huge sector of state property, rendered vulnerable by the deficit in the control exerted by its 'patron', the state. Such a manner of production cannot be described by the standards of normality of the Western capitalist society, although even there we can find tendencies of such a way of producing profit, but rather marginal ones, suppressed by the success of the paradigm of well-regulated competitive market economy, in the conditions of a society that is on an ascending economic curve for more than five decades now.

I shall not use here data on the phenomena of corruption and deviation from the logic of the functioning of the economic system. There is a large quantity of available data, but difficult to assemble in an integrated image. Instead I shall provide the public declarations of some political figures from all the political segments, as the end of the first decade of transition. It is not by mere chance that all these feel the need of using particularly harsh terms for the characterization of the functioning of economy in transition.

In the electoral debates of 2000, Theodor Stolojan¹⁴, solicited to characterize the state of the Romanian society, used the expression: 'plunder! plunder! plunder!'. Radu Vasile, while he was Prime-Minister, estimated the situation of the economy with the following formulation: "There is nothing left to steal!". Miron Mitrea¹⁵ (interview, the 19th of January 2001): 'Is there a lot of stealing going on these days?'; 'I have the feeling that there is a lot of stealing going on from the public money.' And Dan Matei Agaton, minister in the new government of 2001, estimated: 'Highway robbery!'

The re-direction of the resources of the economy was realized through a plurality of mechanisms: starting with the violation of the law, the exploitation of the inadequate legislation and especially of the legislative void, ending with the violation of contracts, especially those with the state. The disproportionate large profits are frequently obtained not by performance, but by speculation and corruption.

¹⁴ Former PM during 1991-1992.

¹⁵ Minister of Transport during 2001-2004.

The transition is based on a paradox concerning the proper mechanisms of a standard market economy: *the growth of profits simultaneously with the fall of economy*; the population is impoverished, and the existent economic resources are dwindled into immediate profits; on its turn, the profit does not transform sufficiently into investments, but more likely into unproductive consumption, very often in an ostentatious display. Such a structural tendency creates in a smaller measure consolidated national capital and more likely a class enriched overnight, which uses that huge gains in unproductive consumption and as an instrument for obtaining, through corruption, a greater wealth. An important part of the autochthonous capitalists was formed and developed through the plundering of resources, not only the ones of state economy, but also of the budget, the non-payment of taxes being the most visible form. To this, a multitude of other types of fraud are added.

The ‘predatory economy’ is a structuring tendency that does not stem from accidents of extrinsic factors, but from the very configuration of the system: the minimization of state intervention and an erroneous sequentiality of the processes of change inevitably engender a secondary structure of the ‘predatory economy’ type. The state property economy, as well as the privatized one has become important sources of profit not through economic performance, but by parasitizing. A healthy and prosperous economy is characterized by mechanisms that ensure the subordination of profit to performance. A sickened economy makes possible the growth of profit even by the destruction of performance.

The explanation of the distorted economic processes through cumulated individual behaviors (scamming, theft, corruption) blocks the understanding of the truly responsible structural mechanisms. It is illustrative for this deficit of understanding the formulation ‘we have corruption without the corrupted’, frequently used in the political struggle of the last years. Its function is a rather ideological one – to generate an dissatisfaction of the population regarding the functioning of the government, regarding its lack of will to bring before justice the ones responsible for the multiple ‘plunders’ of the past. The public conscience has recorded a multitude of cases of abuse that have ruined the Romanian enterprises. The troubling matter is that the immense majority of such cases are not punishable from a juridical point of view because they took place in the context of a confuse legislation, including the lack of legislation and the generalized blockage of the mechanisms of control. It is quite probable, for instance, that the ‘disappearance of the fleet’, which is a clear act of irresponsible robbery as to the interests of the national economy, cannot be proved to have represented a violation of the law and sanctioned consequently. The obsession for the identification of the juridical responsibilities pushes outside the focus of attention the identification of the strategic errors that have facilitated such acts. The utilization of justice in such cases proved to be rather an instrument of ‘laundering’ of the robberies through the granting of a great NBP (‘Not to Be Prosecuted’) and of moral amnesty to those that had abused and stolen, without violation the laws of the time. It is often mistaken, in such cases, the social-moral correctness for the non-violation of the laws, in the conditions of the lack of juridical regulations.

As a consequence, two structural types of the market economy can be distinguished: on the one hand, a functional, balanced market economy that, not lacking acts of corruption and destructive speculations, is yet dominated by a satisfactory level of congruence between the economic performance and profit; on the other hand, a *predatory economy*

characterized by an orientation towards profit that is rather contrary or weakly related to economic performance. Such a type of economy we find, also, in the poor countries in distinct conditions: corrupt authoritarian regimes that distort the balances and institutions of the market, but also in countries with severe deficits of regulation, where the functioning of the market is distorted by the violation of the regulations and the intervention of external systems of power.

The difference between the two types of economy is not given by the behavioral-moral characteristics of the population, by delinquent behaviors, including corruption, but more likely by a complex of internal and external, economic, social and political factors, the determining causal variable being *the economic policy*. The 'functional' market economies are characterized by a multiple control: the mechanisms of market economy competition, the juridical regulations institutionally implemented and only secondary a 'culture of capitalism'. The recently constituted market economies, characterized by underdevelopment and positions of marginality in the global economic system, by weakness in the relations with the external and internal economic and political groups, present a high risk of not functioning properly, of not being able to enter a path of efficient and durable development.

If we want to explain the Romanian society in transition, it is thus necessary to consider both structuring tendencies, one that ensures a durable growth on the long term, the other, characterized by distortion and fierce crises, that has exploded in this lapse of history and that, probably, will diminish in time through the advance of the healthy mechanisms of market economy and the growth of the regulating capacity of the state.

The paradigm of the double structural tendency opens distinct perspectives in a plan of explanation and action. Many negative phenomena, obvious in the experience of the collectivity, no longer appear as 'accidents', unexplainable 'abnormalities', but as manifestations of a structuring tendency. Impoverishment no longer appears just as an inevitable cost of transition, but, up to great measure, as product of the mechanisms of plundering from the economy. 'Corruption', 'tax evasion', 'economic speculation verging on felony and beyond it', do not stem from simple weaknesses of human nature or from 'the character of the Romanian people', but from the operated strategic options.

I shall mention a few of the distinct perspectives of the paradigm of 'predatory economy' for the explanation of the explosion of poverty:

- *the dramatic downfall of economy, which cannot be explained just through the imperatives of restructuring, but also through the disorganization of the economy and the transformation of productive resources into immediate profits;*
- *the growth of process through mechanisms of monopoly and speculations of different kinds;*
- *scamming through financial engineering (tolerated pyramidal games of the CARITAS¹⁶ type or truncated funds of investments such as FNI¹⁷) of some large segments of the population;*
- *corruption by the robbing of the citizen through the various public institutions – public authorities, justice etc.;*
- *the diminution of public social costs caused by the robbing of the budget.*

¹⁶ Organization of the pyramidal type.

¹⁷ Fraudulent fund of investment.

A more and more dramatic deepening of the gap between *the winners of transition* – not the ones that would have been entitled to it in the collective consciousness – and *the losers of transition* – the great mass of the collectivity – was produced. The naïve trust in the capacity of the free market to ensure a balanced and equitable prosperity was blown away. The moral dissatisfaction of the population with the communist regime was related to the fact that the incomes did not express the individual contribution was replaced, in the period of transition, with a totally different type of frustration, even more accentuated: the accumulation of fortune was not realized through morally acceptable means.

The implications of such a definition of economy of transition open a new perspective on the *political system* from the period of transition. This one also cannot be described just as an imperfect representative democracy, still insufficiently functional, but at the same time as a structural complement of predatory economy, an instrument of promotion of this economy.

Corruption as a Form of Predatory Economy

The recent appearance in the public attention of the topic of generalized corruption represents a significant phenomenon in the dynamics of the process of transition. The phenomenon of corruption is real, but not recent, as it exploded even from the beginning of transition. As ampleness, presently, it is probably sensibly more reduced than in the past years.

Beyond the analyses with an ideological tint, the corruption is estimated by the collectivity on the basis of its own experience, as having great scope, representing an important source of collective demoralization, along with the fall of the economy and the standard of life. It stretched over all spheres of authority.

	Almost all/A great part of	A small part of/Almost none
Parliamentarians	69	12
Ministers	62	16
Judges	60	21
Businessmen	57	19
Police officers	58	26
Mayors	44	33
Local counselors	44	33
Functionaries at mayoralties	44	35
Journalists	20	55

Tabel 8.4. *‘According to your opinion, how spread is corruption among... ?’*

The Barometer of public opinion, October 2003. The rest up to 100% represent non-answers, ‘I cannot say.’

The inherited mechanisms: in the explanation of this phenomenon we must take into consideration also the mechanisms of corruption inherited from the communist regime.

There, the structural source of corruption is a contradiction within the strategy of the communist model.

On the one hand, the principle of maintaining a limited differentiation of income was placed at the basis of the communist model of society. Of all the European socialist countries, with the exception of Albania, Romania was characterized by the most accentuated application of this principle. Two mechanisms were utilized in order to promote the objective of this principle: firstly, the severe control of the differentiation of wages. The rapport between the highest wages and the minimal one was limited at the level of 5.4/1. Secondly, the limiting of opportunities of 'luxury' consumption, especially of the good with a high visibility: cars, houses, trips abroad.

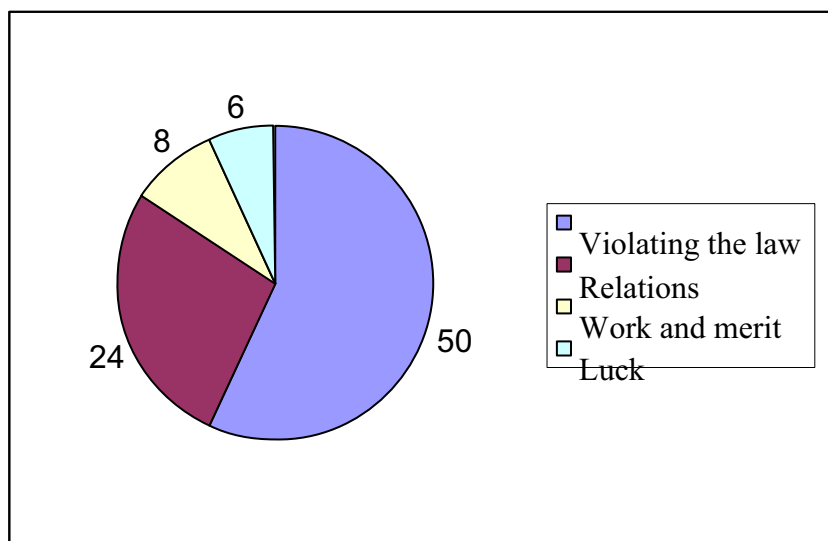
On the other hand, the segment of population that held positions of authority in the society or just positions of control over the distribution towards the population of the goods and services developed an informal system of absorption of a plus, often substantial, of resources, from the state system (directly from enterprises, 'for free' or for symbolical prices) as well as from the population, through the facilitation of access to the rare goods and services. A huge secondary system of redistribution, through the abuse of position, was developed. An amusing definition circulated at the time: 'Theft is a means of socialist distribution'. A research realized in 1980 on the sources of the quality of life identified the fact that 'the vicinity of the sphere of services' (those that worked in the distribution of/access to rare services and goods) represented an important source of the quality of living conditions, of the degree of satisfaction regarding life, optimism, the perceived quality of life (Zamfir, 1984).

The sources of corruption in transition: the transition inherited and continued these mechanisms of access beyond the law to public resources or the ones of the population, to which new mechanisms were added. The following structural sources of corruption can be identified at the very heart of the new system:

- a) *The corruption as a mechanism of forming private property and of balancing the incomes from the public system related to the ones from the private area.* On the background of the boom of income opportunities and of consumption aspirations, a new unbalance appeared: between the rapidly increasing incomes from the system of private economy and the severely limited ones from the public sector. The highest access to the new opportunities belongs to, as it normally should in the process of forming the private economy, the new class of business people. Alongside the new capitalists, the managers from the new private enterprises have obtained regular salaries, as well as bonus ones, far greater than the highest positions in the public system. Even the political peaks – ministers, members of the parliament – had more than modest wages (2-300 dollars), in contrast with many beginner managers who rapidly reached 800 dollars. The frustration of the ones that occupied positions in the public system was accentuated by the fact that they controlled, mainly, the transfer of public resources to the private system through the program of privatization and restitution of property, but also through the organization of auctions for the public programs. A new possible mechanism of corruption appeared, which was exploited to the full: the coalition between the private beneficiaries from the public resources and those that controlled this mechanism of transfer.

The philosophy of privatization did not stress the principle of just payment, but the one of restructuring and re-launch of privatized enterprises. Hence a structural source of corruption: the access to the privatization of state property, at low prices and convenient post-privatization contractual conditions, was controlled by the system of public authority. The same thing happened in so what regards the control of the fulfillment of the clauses written into the contracts of privatization. A ‘sharing’, beyond the law, of the benefits of privatization between the new owners and the ones that facilitated the privatization, was favored by the extremely poor instruments of control. In the conditions of the chaos created by a primitive liberalization, the apparition of a private-public partnership in the robbing of state resources was predictable.

- b) *The control as source of corruption.* A distinct source of corruption was the very institution of control: the generalized deficit of control has disorganizing effects for the collectivity. Also, the distribution of some public goods vital for the population – *justice, security, social rights* – has become an important source of corruption.



Graph 8.1. ‘How do you believe that the majority of people who made a fortune in Romania succeeded in doing so?’. The Barometer of public opinion, October 2003.

A few examples of such negative effects: the impoverishing of the budget through the covering of debts of state enterprises, produced by a large net of fraud through the cooperation of managers from the state enterprises and the ‘tick’ private ones; the draining of the resources of state enterprises, the covering from the budget of the damages produced by the deficient functioning of state enterprises, but also through the fraudulent or negligent privatization.

The state banks were bankrupted through fraud or simply through contracts that ignored their own interest. Through the fraud against the banks not only the impoverishing of the

deponents was produced, but also a fraud against the budget, obliged to cover the debts. Bancorex¹⁸ is a paradigmatic case.

The criminal toleration of pyramidal games is another type of corruption. Being falsely sustained by important public figures through the invocation of the principle of free private initiative, the state intervened far too late, after a great mass of the population was impoverished, in some cases irreversibly and dramatically. It was known from the beginning what the results of these pyramidal system would be. A legislative intervention of control was possible, only it was intolerably postponed.

FNI represented a somewhat more sophisticated form of pyramidal games. It also was tolerated, in spite of the evidence that the initial excessive profits would be followed by a fall of the system.

All these means of fraud were possible due to a generalized complicity of the public system: starting with the activity of creating a legislative frame and ending with the key-positions of the ones that controlled the application of the law.

The accentuated political struggle was, paradoxically, an important source of corruption instead of being a mechanism for its limitation. The mechanisms of mutual surveillance of the parties proved to be rather poor. Aside from the creation of a trans-party coalition for the exploitation of resources, the political struggle was a factor of disorganization of the public mechanisms of control. The political-rendering of the public institutions was less used as a weapon in the fight against political adversaries, towards which a rather lax tolerance is being manifested, and more for the protection of their own interests.

The Explicative Model of the Failures of Transition

Two Strategic Options of the Explanation

For the explanation of a sufficiently complex social phenomenon/process – *a multifactorial analysis* –, two components can be mentioned: the identification of the factors, with the determination of the explicative contribution of each of them, and a global explicative model that connect in a global structure the explicative factors. In the practice of multifactorial explanations, two distinct strategies can be identified:

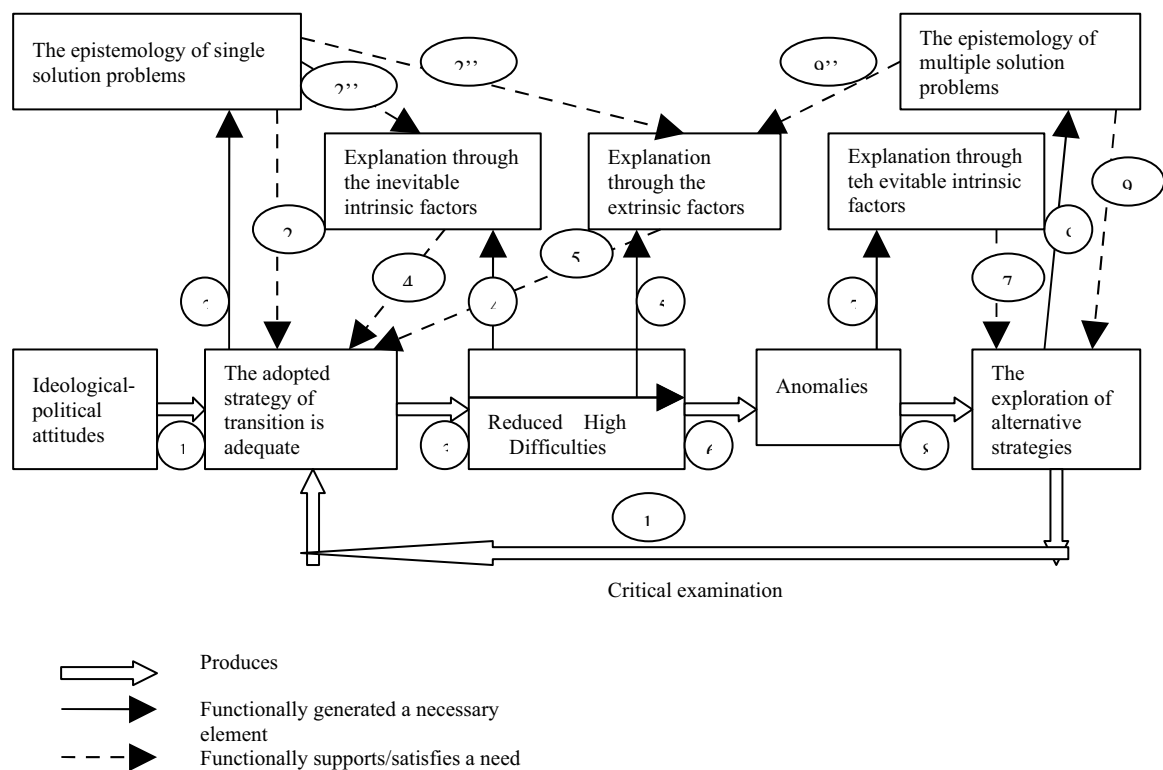
1. *the strategy of 'backward', 'factor by factor' explanation*: each factor presupposed to be determinant is explored separately (*unifactorial analysis*), with the hope that on this basis, a global explanation, a multifactorial analysis will result. This strategy is based on two presuppositions of the nature of the explanation:
 - a) it is possible to determine the explicative contribution of each factor, isolated from the other factors. It is therefore rendered possible an *unifactorial analysis independent from the analysis of the other factors*;
 - b) a multifactorial explanation is the sum of the unifactorial explanations;
2. *the strategy of globalist explanation* start from the presupposition that the determining factors interact intensely, forming a *determining global net*. As a consequence, there are no explanations centered on a factor, accomplished independently from the presuppositions regarding the contributions of the other

¹⁸ Romanian bank, representative for the financial disaster explained above.

factors. In fact, any unifactorial analysis tacitly involves a global system. The identification of the contribution of a factor does not represent the processing of empirical information, but it is partially explicative.

In the explanation of a social system, we must also take into account the, often tacit, *ideological component*. The explanation is related to the action of social actors: it justifies/supports or criticizes their options. The explanation has therefore an ideological function. As such, the social groups will exert, inevitably, pressures on the orientation of the explanations of social phenomena. Especially in the case of social phenomena that are very important to the collectivity, the explanation is not independent from the ideological and political options. We must thus expect that the explanations of the strategy of transition and at the same time the logical consequence of the global explicative model tacitly used in the analysis to not be the products of a strictly cognitive process, but also of a social-cognitive one.

The Structure of the Explicative Model



Graph 8.2. The explicative model of the difficulties of transition.

Graph 8.2 offers a schema of the main articulations of the explicative model of the difficulties of transition.

1. The strategy of transition, being the product of a complex of social processes, is ideologically and politically sustained by the actors that have produced it.
2. To consider the adopted strategy as being inadequate tacitly includes the epistemology of single solution problems: is the strategy is adequate, that means it is the *only* adequate one. The exploration of possible alternatives would shake the faith in the adopted strategy, therefore they are rejected as being inadequate. The choice of the model of *the epistemology of single solution problems* presents a limited capacity to explain the difficulties produced in the process of transition, creating a certain myopia in the favoring of only the inevitable intrinsic factors (2'') and the extrinsic ones (2''').
3. The application of the strategy produces the projected changes, yet accompanied by difficulties and negative effects.
4. A relatively reduced level of difficulties is explicatively absorbed by the recourse to explanations through the inevitable intrinsic factors: the normal costs of such a change. Such an explicative scheme functionally strengthens the estimation that the adopted strategy is adequate (4').
5. The increase of difficulties makes the extrinsic explanations more plausible. These explanations functionally strengthen the faith in the correctness of the adopted strategy, in spite of the great problems created in the course of its application.

The process is circular from every point of view. The more important the intrinsic factors in the producing of the difficulties of transition, the more the investment with plus-value in the selected strategy generates an increase of the defensive behavior, which, on its turn, augments the importance given to the extrinsic factors. The need of action, under the conditions of the overestimation of the extrinsic factors, leads to poorly efficient options: the action on the extrinsic factors that, of course, can have positive effects, but the leaving aside of the action of intrinsic factors renders the action in its entirety poorly efficient.

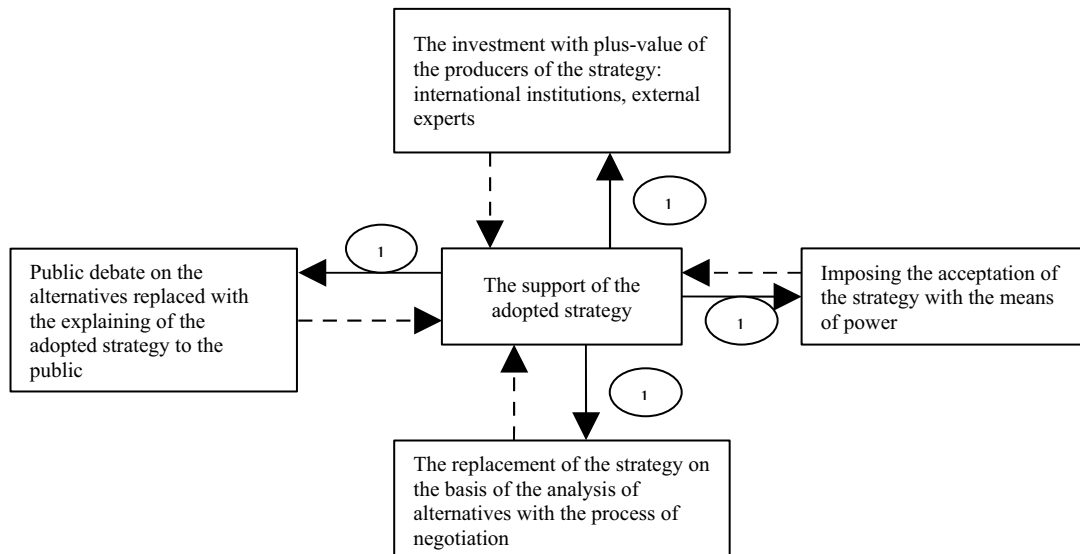
6. Beyond a certain limit, the difficulties turn into *anomalies*. The presupposition that the adopted strategy is adequate is questioned. The anomalies can no longer be explicatively absorbed, in a justifying manner for the adopted strategy, through inevitable intrinsic or extrinsic factors.
7. The explicative absorption of anomalies can be accomplished only by the examination of the strategy itself as sources of the difficulties and problems that could have been avoided by alternative strategic options – the evitable intrinsic factors. Such an orientation can diminish the perceived contribution of some strategic alternatives.
8. The identification of the sources of crises of the adopted strategic options (the explicative absorption of anomalies) inevitably produces the search for strategic alternatives.
9. The exploration of strategic alternatives engenders a change of the epistemological model at the basis of the explanation: the epistemology of single solution problems is replaced with the epistemology multiple solution problems. The latter epistemology sustains its proper orientation: the intrinsic factors that produce crises must be regarded not as *inevitable* (normal in the situation where

the practiced strategy has no alternatives), but as *evitable* ones through the adoption of better alternative strategies.

10. The exploration of alternative strategies motivates the critical examination of the practiced strategy. The epistemology of multiple solution problems generates another self-strengthening circuit: the anomalies motivate the critical analysis of the practiced solution (the exploration of intrinsic factors) and the exploration of alternatives. Their identification could motivate, if the problem is still actual, the change of strategy.

From the point of view of efficacy, it is clear that the model of *the epistemology of multiple solution problems* is in a productive position. On the one hand, the exploration of the intrinsic factors diminishes the defensive mechanisms, opening the perspective of a realistic exploration of the contribution of various explicative factors. On the other hand, the exploration of the intrinsic factors stimulates, through its very nature, the exploration of alternatives.

The above explicative schema may be completed by a series of external connections.



Graph 8.3. The schema of the interaction between political struggle and explanation.

The social-political interest in sustaining the adopted strategy generates a series of inevitable circuits.

11. The democratic exercise of public debates tends to be replaced by an authoritarian-paternalist exercise of ‘explaining’ the adopted strategic options to the population, which is assumed not to understand them. The explanation of transition becomes an *instrument* of political struggle. Generally, the political struggle tends to accentuate the extrinsic factors in the explanation of the difficulties of transition.
12. The investment with plus-value of the producers of the strategy in order to sustain the undisputable character of the already made options.

13. The imposing of the acceptance of the strategy with the means of authority and power.
14. The important changes of strategy are publicly assumed by the main producers: the international institutions and seldomly by governments. They are not produced by public debates, but by the internal decisions of these institutions. The errors are rarely admitted in public and even then in a rather general manner, vaguely and partially, predominating the ideological support of the promoted options.

The continuous adjustment of the strategy is not produced through the means of publicly debating the option, but more likely through a process of negotiation between the organisms of authority – the governments and international institutions – ‘behind closed doors’, lacking public transparency. If in public discussions the partners of discussion are equal, the arguments being the decisive ones, in the processes of negotiation, the parts are not equal, the differences of power being decisive. Most of the times, the negotiation does not have as object the option between alternatives, but rather the flexibility of the options already made by the international institutions, in primary connection to the concrete conditions. The whole process of transition probates the existence of a fundamental solidarity among the main external institutions involved, related to the countries in transition. Public debates are rarely organized among these institutions on the topic of strategic options. And when these take place, they have a limited public disclosure. The resolving of the differences of points of view is accomplished through negotiations that are beyond public visibility.

The position of the political groups from the government or the opposition utilizes in the explanation of the difficulties of transition, different schemes:

- *the groups in the government:*
 - a) the political adversaries sabotage the efforts of the government to promote transition;
 - b) the extrinsic factors, but also the inevitable intrinsic factors, are invoked with priority;
 - c) the mass of the population is responsible for the failures of transition due to its attitude and behaviors;
- *the groups in opposition:*
 - a) the strategy is good (the interest for attracting the support of external social actors), but it is not correctly applied by the government or it is delayed. The conservatism and communist tendencies hinder the implementation of transition;
 - b) corruption, theft;
 - c) the collectivity is guilty that it does politically endorse the right party, due to its communist mentalities.

The internal struggles for power enhance the charismatic investment of the strategy: the opposition utilizes the critique made by the Occident to the deviations of the policy of the government from the strategy of transition, as an extrinsic argument for the explanation of the failures of transition. In order to sustain the political opposition, as well as in order to increase conformity, a tightening in the rigidity of the faith the Occident has in the

strategy it itself had produced is thus enforced. Complementary, the government also enters the political game of authority: its solutions are promoted with the investment of Occidental authority into order to suppress the criticism of the internal opposition, as well as the external ones. Thus a vicious circle is created implying the resort to the arbitration of the Occident, through the suppression of public debates as customary practice and the avoidance of the critical analysis of the strategy.

The circle of extrinsic explanations/recourse to authority has disastrous effects on the morale of the collectivity: passive-rendering, non-involvement in the public debates, political confusion, demoralization regarding the political system in general and, in time, the development of an anti-Occidental attitude.

Five Structures of the Explanation Function of the Stages of the Evolution of Transition

The explicative structure of the difficulties of transition in their Romanian reflection is different with the stages of the evolution of the transition in itself. Each explicative structure is built on the priority invocation of a certain type of explicative factors. This pattern of evolution is, probably, also valid for the other European countries in transition.

Stage 1: candid optimism as to the rapid positive results. The first moments after the Revolution were characterized by enthusiasm and very optimistic expectations. It was estimated that the benefits of change would appear immediately, and in the short period of time the Romanian society would be restructured, reaching a level definitely superior to the starting point of transition. There weren't any major problems foreseen in this process. (*The Outline of the Strategy of Transition to Market Economy*, 1990; Zamfir, 1999).

Stage 2: denial of the difficulties and problems that started to appear. Soon, the collectivity began to face important difficulties, while the reaction of the responsible political actors was still of denial regarding their real existence: the economy actually is not falling apart, there is not growth of poverty ('Have you seen people in the street stumbling out of hunger?') and so on and so forth.

Stage 3: accepting some definite negative effects as inevitable costs for such a process. The concept of *cost of transition*, introduced a short time after the initiation of the process of change, represented the method of bringing into public awareness the fact that the problems and difficulties of transition are much more accentuated than it had been initially foreseen, yet their interpretation being accommodated with the optimistic orientation. The problems of transition are not only the inherited ones, but also some new ones, engendered by the every process of transition. Such a profound socio-economic change cannot avoid the processes of disorganization. The restructuring of the economy will undergo an inevitable drop of production, with negative effects on the collectivity. Such negative effects must consequently be *accepted* by the collectivity as a price of change.

Stage 4: shifting the accent on the extrinsic factors in the explanation of the difficulties of transition. The growth in magnitude of the negative effects and their excessive persistence, beyond what could be interpreted as inevitable effects of change, bring into the foreground *the extrinsic explanations*. Various social-historical circumstances of change, exterior to the strategy itself, have induced negative effects, distorting a process of change that could have been, otherwise, much more efficient. The responsibility falls in the areas of some factors independent from the chosen solutions, irrelevant for the evaluation of the latter. If the negative effects that appear in the course of transition were considered as being the specific products of a strategy, therefore intrinsic to it, the pragmatic conclusion would be: the identification of responsibilities, investigation of alternatives and change of the adopted strategy, if that is still possible. On the contrary, the invocation of some extrinsic explicative factors generated an attitude regarding the practiced strategy: it is good, and its results would have been the expected ones, had it not been for a series of exterior factors; the difficulties are induced from the outside. Beyond its partial correctness, the explanation of the difficulties through the extrinsic factors represents a defensive-justifying scheme of the adopted strategy, its ideological core. The centering on extrinsic explanation has the function of absorbing the incertitude regarding the quality of the chosen strategy, of rejecting the critiques and eliminating the exploration of alternatives. Thus, a collective acceptance of a process of change that has become more and more bitterly frustrating is achieved.

Stage 5: explanation through the evitable intrinsic factors. It becomes more and more clear that the complex problems appeared in the course of transition cannot be satisfactorily explained only through inevitable intrinsic factors or through extrinsic factors. More and more questions arise as to the adequateness of various strategic options. Could it be that the very strategic options in themselves are responsible for the series of negative processes and failures? The first focus of analysis shifts to *the evitable intrinsic explicative factors*. The arising of such questions pushes towards the replacement of the epistemological model of single solution problems with the model of multiple solution problems. The interest for the exploration of possible strategic options is thus opened.

The Exit from the Dogmatism of the Epistemology of Single Solution Problems

The first step for the construction of a paradigm of constructive sociological knowledge, different from the one towards which institutional knowledge is inclined, is an explicit epistemological option. The complex problems have multiple solutions that must be identified and evaluated before choosing it, as well as during the implementation of the adopted solutions, having as target their perfecting/changing.

Such a modification of the epistemological fundament does not entail a punctual effect with limited consequences, but changes the entire cognitive universe of a society.

The 20th century was characterized the lack of will to explore, at the level of global societies, the alternatives as a source of all dogmatisms. Unfortunately, the first years of the 21st century exhibit slim chances of changing the epistemological orientation.

The rupture between the two world systems, capitalism and socialism, which have dominated the 20th century, was the profound source of modern dogmatism. The Soviet dogmatism was opposed by the Occidental one. The dogmatism developed in the process of absorbing the communist system, as any dogmatism, was characterized by a closure stemming from irrational anguish.

We talk more and more about the necessity of moving towards a 'society of knowledge'. The first step for the constructing of such a society is the acceptance of alternatives in all the areas of decision.

Epilogue: History Goes On, but How?

In the near future, the transition will be over. Its anguishes will be forgotten, becoming a part of history. For a while, the academic environments will continue to discuss the strategy of transition, but the interest will gradually peter out. The finalization of transition will make its critical analysis less interesting.

The international institutions will close the chapter in question, recording a remarkable success: in 10-15 years, a short historical period of time, a stunning social transformation was accomplished. Regarded from the position of the successes to come, the shadows of sufferings will wane. History will absorb the responsibilities: sure, mistakes were made, there was no other way around it, we have learnt it from our own experience. The collectivities that have gone through transition, so much blamed today, will receive amnesty: they have proved dedication, will to change, courage, valiantly enduring the difficulties that, in the meantime, have been recategorized as inevitable costs.

And yet, we still have to learn a little more than these stereotypical phrases that agglutinate the responsibilities and prepare the path for the repetition of errors in other circumstances that the future will provide.

The present book suggests a few conclusions that I believe we must incorporate in the vision of the future.

What must the academic environment learn?

It must develop its capacity, which the transition found to be severely limited, to project and evaluate the construction of a society. In other words, it is necessary for a new constructive science to be crystallized, alongside the explicative science. Constructive knowledge must not, as it presently happens, be exclusively delegated to the institutions that produce the future.

What must the institutions the produce the future learn?

Beyond their successes/failures, the institutions that have as objective social development face a new problem of structure: how to replace *the authoritarianism of good intentions*, developed in the relations with the affected collectivities and the scientific community, with *a democracy of the process of social development*.

A partnership with the collectivities that benefit/suffer from the support of *the institutions with a constructive vocation* has obviously become increasingly urgent.

Especially in the international relations, there is a deficit of democratic mechanisms: how can the sustained collectivities participate in the elaboration of the programs of

development; how can they control the implementation of the programs of development; in what measure are the international institutions responsible and towards whom?

A new partnership with science is to be built. The actual institutions have obtained remarkable successes regarding science, managing to *internalize* it: they have employed specialists, assimilated in their structures results of scientific knowledge and have ordered scientific studies. There also in this relation a type of authoritarianism, a monopoly in constructive knowledge. It is vital, nowadays, for them to complete the *internalization* of science with the *externalization* of the scientific analysis of the options of institutions. Complementary with the assimilation of the scientific community in its structures of authority, it is necessary to build a relation of dialogue where the partners are equal. Thus, the actual practice will be surpassed, where knowledge is integrated in the logic of authority and in the ideology of institutions, anesthetizing the objective and critical spirit. The relation between institutions and knowledge must become a central one, which would ensure the productivity of human effort.

What must the national political class learn?

To free itself from the dependence on external actors and even more from using them in internal political struggles, which is essential for truly becoming the promoter of the interests of the collectivity that it represents.

To place at the basis of political options the solidarity around national interests.

To develop an honest and equal partnership with all the internal actors, constructed on a national dialogue on the strategic options, subordinating the parish interests of the party.

What must the collectivity learn?

To overcome the passivity that it was pushed and maintained into and to develop the active interests for the strategic options of development, instead of merely being a spectator to the 'match' between the political actors.

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