The Process of Collectivization Approached in Romanian Propagandistic Literature

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ABSTRACT

The article analyses one of the most representative propagandistic literary productions that approached the subject of collectivization in Romania, that is the short story entitled The Unfolding written by Marin Preda. The subject brought into attention cannot be discussed without a previous review over the social and political context in the communism, propaganda, situation of peasantry and new ideological patterns that marked people mentality and behavior, class struggle, Party doctrine and all the actions that changed completely the picture of the Romanian society.

Keywords: Collectivization, Communism, Discourse, Kulak, Literature, Party, Politics, Propaganda

Social and political changes have always found their echo in various types of artistic expression, especially in cinema productions and literature. During the communist regime, literature and cinematography focused on the propaganda discourse, imposing human patterns and types of behavior specific to the ideological climate and events of the new socialist order. Collectivization of agriculture is one of the major topics reflected in the Romanian literature and cinematography, accompanied by controversies both around the problem and the writers suspected to have colluded with the party ideology and collaborated with the Security. In order to better understand the clichés, ideology and events projected by the propaganda literature and cinematography it is necessary to study the socio-political background that imposed such cultural patterns.

After the abolition of monarchy and abdication of King Mihai in 1947, Romania became a totalitarian state of Stalinist type, during 1947-1989 the power being concentrated around the Romanian Communist Party (PCR), the single political party in the country. The radical reforms sustained by PCR focused on carrying out the communist revolution according to the Soviet doctrine, implying all the afferent changes meant to implement socialism: nationalization of the means of production and industry, consequently followed by the abolition of the private property and its being undertaken in the administration of the state (hospitals, schools, factories, stores, etc.); cooperativization of
agriculture (forced association of peasants to the agricultural production cooperatives (CAP); planning the economy according to the five-year plans aiming at the transition from the agrarian economy to the industrial one, which had as an effect the mass migration of peasants from rural to urban areas; isolation from the Occidental world; patriotic work to the State’s advantage; political enrollment in the organizations that preached education in the spirit of devotion to the Party and its beloved supreme leader, beginning with the Country’s Falcons at the kindergarten, followed by the Pioneer Organization and Union of Communist Youth (UTC) and then the Romanian Communist Party (PCR), all those leagues insisting on the new type of man devoted to the people and its absolute leader. The forced elimination of the rural private property had dramatic consequences given that the resistance of peasants to the process of collectivization resulted in abuses, threats, intimidations, aggressive actions meant to determine the wealthy village farmers (named kulaks by the communists, who considered them enemies of the people) to yield their lands to the collectivist organizations. Neagu Djuvara, one of the most prestigious Romanian historians, presents the impact of the Soviet occupation that changed our whole system of values, beginning with the oppression over the intellectuals and politicians and continuing with the forced industrialization of the country (Djuvara, 2007, 255-259).

The post-revolutionary years of the 90’s, marked both by the euphoria of demolishing the previous structures and confused spirit and sometimes revengeful pride, brought about the trend of moral cleaning along with extreme gestures such as that of erasing from the cultural memory whole pages of history, including literature wrote during the Communism under particular laws imposed by the political and social conditions of the moment. During the Communist regime, the artistic discourse was an instrument of propaganda controlled by the Party. The literature of propagandistic use was official, having as a target ideological indoctrination, thus focusing artistic energies to purposes outside the proper artistic area (Negrici, 2010, 14). The political factor interfered in directing writers to less aesthetic trajectories related to the conditions of the moment, insisting on the ideological content of the works and its impact on the collective spirit, to the disadvantage of stylistic achievement. In totalitarian societies, censorship acts politically and controls the production and distribution of art works, preventing those that it finds dangerous and offensive (Becker, 1982, 185). The creative context conditioned by the political pressure, and the psychological specificity of the literature under the Communism impose its particular profile as a product of a restrained and closed space that functioned according to specific laws (Negrici, 2010, 16). The artistic attitudes and typologies appeared on this special psychological background reflected the individual conscience facing a dramatic historical moment. The controversies around numerous writers refer to their compromises and agreements with the Security and Communist ideology under conditions sometimes forced and justified by the pressures of the repressive apparatus that made use of strategies of intimidation focused on discouraging, confusing and splitting the group unity and disintegrating individual conscience.

The propagandistic ideology assigned precise directions inclusively in the field of literary artistic discourse which had to comply with the guidelines of socialist realism. That approach focused on the topic of class conflict with protagonists coming from clear divided groups. Positive characters were acted by the builders of the new socialist order, namely party members, CAP directors, young members of the UTC, comrade-women affiliated to the working class, etc., illustrating typologies in accordance with the Marxist-Leninist ideology they had to spread or apply within the collectivity they belonged to. During the short relaxed moments rid of the vigilant eye of the censorship, a series of writers exploited and speculated the niches that permitted them to intermingle stylistic subtleties, allusions and diversions in the evolution of the facts they presented, enlarge the thematic field and afforded to approach complex and detailed characters and extend the psychological
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