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SOURCE Romania Muncitoare

ECONOMIC AND LABOR CONDITIONS IN RUMANIA

MARKUP ON FOOD -- Paris, Romania Muncitoare, Jan 54

An idea of the extent to which Communist governments fleece the people can be gained from the following table, showing prices per kilogram (unless otherwise indicated) and in lei:

Item	Price Paid to Producer	Retail Price, Rationed	Retail Price, Free	Markup	Retail, Black Market
Beef (fat, live weight)	.90	5.00	8.00	7.10	10-12
Beef (good)	.30	4.80	7.56	6.76	--
Beef (Commercial)	.65	4.60	7.00	6.35	--
Beef (lean)	.55	4.50	6.90	5.45	--
Hogs (fat)	1.75	6.00	9.00	7.25	12-15
Hogs (medium)	1.60	5.40	8.36	6.76	--
Hogs (lean)	1.50	5.20	8.30	6.80	--
Milk (per liter)	.40	--	1.10	.70	--
Sheep cheese	3.50	--	11.00	7.50	--
Sheep cheese (sharp, from Moldavia)	3.50	--	12.50	11.50	--
Fresh butter	7.00	--	21.50	14.50	--

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It must be remembered that the prices paid to the producer are those at which the peasants must deliver their produce to the state, in accordance with the decree of 13 December 1953, which, according to Gheorghiu-Dej, was to result in a vast improvement of the peasants' standard of living.

A VISIT TO BUCHAREST -- Paris, Romania Muncitoare, Jan 54

The following is part of an article which appeared in the first issue of Vocia Libertatii, a newspaper issued in Athens by Greek emigres from Rumania. The author, a traveling salesman who spent a week in Bucharest in late fall 1953, reports that he was amazed at the general sadness and miserable appearance of a people he had known to be gay and prosperous in 1936. He could do no business, since he could buy only lamp chimneys and storm lanterns.

He frequently tried to engage people in conversation in restaurants by offering them drinks, but he was successful only once, when an elderly factory worker accepted an offer of hot prune brandy. After the second drink, he became more communicative and asked all sorts of questions about life outside the Iron Curtain but refused to answer any question. He was most interested in learning when Eisenhower would save them. His parting words were: "You lucky people who live in free countries; here we are suffocating and starving."

DEVELOPMENTS IN TRADE UNIONS IN 1953 -- Paris, Romania Muncitoare, Jan 54

Stelian Moraru, president of the Central Council of Trade Unions, reported at the Rumanian Trade Union Congress of January 1953 that "the trade union membership has reached 2,300,000 workers, technicians, employees, engineers, and students; 600,000 workers, technicians, and employees [foremen, white-collar workers, etc.] among them are active in trade union organs and committees. These figures reflect the political and numerical growth of the Rumanian working class."

In 1953, according to official statistics, the working class added another 200,000 workers, employees, and technicians to its ranks. Scanteia Tineretului of 11 December 1953 wrote that in the third quarter of 1953 alone, trade, intermediate, and higher schools had produced 82,000 new cadres for all branches of the national economy, for cultural activities, and for the field of health. One should therefore have expected a corresponding growth in trade union membership, especially since there are about 200,000 old hands that had not yet joined. But Munca of 16 December 1953 gives away the fact that the trade union membership is falling rather than growing, for it writes that "at present, membership is almost 2,300,000, of whom 600,000 are active in trade union organs and committees". In other words, membership dropped slightly during the year.

The reason for the lack of appeal of trade unions has been revealed by Alexandru Moghioros, third-highest man in the Rumanian Communist Party and the Central Committee's secretary for organizational problems. In his analysis of the reasons for the lack of success of mass organizations, he wrote in Scanteia of 15 October 1953:

"Some of the trade union organs, and even the Central Council of Trade Unions, do not satisfactorily accomplish their mission to enforce compliance with the Labor Code and collective contracts to ensure the availability of adequate housing and social and cultural institutions for the workers."

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Lupta de Clasa, too, has spoken of "the indifference of trade union leadership to workers' needs."

The explanation for this situation is simple. In the Communist setup, trade unions are mainly tools for the exploitation of workers, and this takes precedence over welfare considerations. This was clearly demonstrated by a recent statement of the secretary of the mass-production section of the Light Industries Trade Union in connection with the new drive for increased production of consumer goods. He explained that prices could only be reduced by greater production, and greater production must be achieved by better utilization of internal resources, that is, "by executing ... in as short a time as possible ... the various operations ... by more intensive utilization of machine tools ... and more rational utilization of raw materials."

In other words, workers must work harder. This is also the main purpose of the recent "reform of the wage system in light industry," which provides, among other means of squeezing more work out of the workers, for an "improved system of bonuses." Brigade leaders, foremen, their assistants etc., are to receive substantial bonuses if they succeed in exhausting all internal reserves. But this maneuver is just as unlikely to succeed in light industry as in the coal industry, where it was introduced in June 1952 and did not overcome the chronic failure to fulfill the plan.

HIGH PERCENTAGE OF UNPRODUCTIVE EMPLOYEES -- Paris, Romania Muncitoare, Jan 54

Lupta de Clasa, No 10, of 1953 published a study by economist I. Rachmuth, in which he claimed that labor productivity in 1950 had increased in Rumania 8-3 percent over the figure for 1949, 31.2 percent over 1949 in 1951, and 48 percent over 1949 in 1952. This is the main cause of the growth in the national income over that period, which, according to Rachmuth, reached 73 percent.

The obvious question then is why the living standards of the workers have not improved but declined? The answer is mainly to be found in the exorbitant tribute levied by Moscow in return for Soviet-Rumanian friendship and the tremendous number of parasites represented by government and party officials, as well as by the supervisory apparatus in industry.

The Five-Year Plan provided for an increase in wage earners from 2,250,000 in 1951 to 3 million in 1955, of whom 1,800,000 were to be workers [laborers] and 1,200,000 employees [all wage earners not engaged in production]. More than 150,000 new wage earners were to be recruited annually, including both groups. But Miron Constantinescu specified in his plan that the number of manual workers alone was to be increased by 760,000. Of these, 600,000 were to come from the village population and the rest from the cities. It follows that what industry needed was workers and that the number of employees was to be reduced by 10,000.

However, something seems to have gone wrong with the plan, for the annual rate of increase of wage earners has been over 200,000, a phenomenon which was represented by Scanteia of 8 December 1953 as a success for the regime. On the other hand, the government, in its decree of 18 November 1953, spoke of the necessity of reducing the "unjustified growth in the number of employees."

But in practice this does not appear an easy thing to do. Speaking of the industrial sector only, Rachmuth stated that the total number of workers and employees in Rumanian industry had grown from 700,000 in 1949 to almost one million in 1952, of which 792,000 were workers, compared with 534,000 in 1949. It follows that the number of wage earners rose by 300,000 in 3 years, that is, by 43 percent, but while the number of workers grew by 258,000, that is, by 48 percent, the number of employees grew by 42,000, or 25 percent.

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For every four productive workers hired, one additional employee is therefore also hired, who, in his capacity of setting up norms, checker, dispatcher, etc., receives a much higher wage than even a skilled worker. It should be obvious that Rumanian industry is not in a position to support an army of high-priced parasites and that if the miserable lot of the workers is to be improved, most of those who are there to check, supervise, watch, and police the workers should be dropped and their wages diverted to the real workers. But it is difficult to conceive a Communist regime operating without a vast police apparatus.

STAKHANOVISM IN RUMANIA -- Paris, Romania Muncitoare, Jan 54

Scanteia of 8 December 1953 announced that in the 2 years since the introduction of Stakhanovism in Rumania, almost 25,000 workers and technicians had earned this proud distinction and over 251,000 had earned the title of leading worker, which is only slightly less honorable than the Stakhanovite award.

However, Communist statistics are sometimes peculiar. Referring to the number of women Stakhanovites in Rumania, Viata Capitalei of 31 May 1953 put the figure at 650, but on 1 June 1953, Scanteia reproduced the report of Mrs Raceanu to the Congress of Democratic Women in which she announced there were 1,700.

As it is hardly believable that the number was almost tripled in 24 hours, the conclusion must be drawn that Communist statistics are not very reliable, and one may have some doubts as to the accuracy of the statistics showing a grand total of 25,000 Stakhanovites, despite the fact that this would only be about 1 percent of the total labor force.

Munca of 24 November 1953 bragged about the numerous Stakhanovites, such as Geza Kopetin, Mihai Moraru, Mihai Stefan, Naidu Juliu, etc., in the coal mines. However, on 8 December, the same paper carried a letter from Geza Kopetin, revealing the true conditions in the Lonea III Mine and, for that matter, in the entire coal industry: "There are some brigades," he wrote, "in which the latest methods are used, such as the cyclic-graph, the Randin, and the Voroshin methods. But the efforts of only a few brigades are not enough to fulfill the plan for the entire mine. In October, four out of eight brigades working by cyclic graphs did not fulfill the cycles. In November, there were still eight brigades listed, but actually only five were using the graph."

LABOR PROBLEM -- Paris, Romania Muncitoare, Jan 54

Scanteia Tineretului of 20 November 1953 puts its finger on a new sore spot of Communism. It complains that too many young workers have no liking for their work and constantly change trades; whatever their work, they always want to do something different.

The explanation which the newspaper seems to miss is very simple: The constant turnover is the result of the Communist system of forcing young men to learn whatever trade is suffering from a labor shortage, instead of allowing them to follow their natural inclinations. When, furthermore, the young men find that work which they dislike is also badly paid, they seize the first opportunity to try something else, and are again disappointed, especially since they lack the time and the opportunity to learn the new trade thoroughly.

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