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Contributions to the knowledge of the evolution of Dâmbovită's agriculture

*Stefan ISPAS,**
*Carmen ANTOHE**

The archaeological researches and the agricultural tools found in Dambovită district, prove that agriculture has existed in this district since old times, in a high populated zone, having very favourable natural conditions: varied relief, with a large area of plains (61% from the district area), from which the river meadows have a high share, with most fertile soils, temperate climate safe from the summer heat and winter hard frost and also a rich drainage such as Argeș, Dambovită and Ialomița rivers.

The geographical position of the district at the crossing of some commercial roads, the existence of Târgoviște town since 1396, which became in 1418 the capital of Wallachia (Țara Românească), but especially the development of a great town near by Bucharest - which needed a great amount of fresh vegetables, fruits and meat, for consumption as well as for industrialization, were also very favorable economic conditions for the development of Dambovită's agriculture.

In time, this development shows some periods of time:

I. The period before 1860 was characterized by the predominance of the forests, which covered large areas of land.

The Picior de Munte plain was entirely covered by woods, while Vlăsia Forest was larger (Szatmari Map, 1864). Some names of fields (Buturugi, Bulumac) or villages (Ulmi, Aninoasa, Dumbrava, Nucet, Lazuri, Braniste) show the existence of woods in these zones, today being agricultural zones.

Large areas were covered with pastures and hay fields on the river meadows and especially on hills and mountains from the northern part of the district.

The base of the agricultural economy was animal breeding, especially cattle and sheep. They practiced bee culture, as we can notice from the name of the "Priseacă" forest and village near Târgoviște.

The arable grounds were extended on a small area, and they practiced a black early ploughing agricultural system and a usually

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ploughing of the land. They still grew millet, buckwheat and Italian millet, the potatoes being almost unknown.

The agricultural production was used for their own consumption, the commodity output, being undeveloped.

A part of the inhabitants was doing some agricultural complementary trades, with the raw material base from the rural region. Thus, they produced clay vessels and pots in Olari (Darmanesti commune) and Gheboia (Dragomiresti commune) villages. We also mention Ciurari, Matasaru, Boteni, Croitori, Butoiu, and Ocnita, whose names clearly show the occupations, which, were practiced there.

In this period, feudal relations of production dominated the whole agricultural economy and the great landed property.

II. Between 1860 and The First World War, they can notice the large area of agricultural lands, to the forests and natural lawn detriment, especially in the first part of this period. After 1900 important changes took place in the land and crops structure.

Thus, the cereal crops were extended, first of all the wheat, which was required for exportation and then the maize which provided people's food. They grew new technical crops and the fruit trees covered large area from the hilly region of the district.

The shepherds from Dambovită and Ialomița Valley were known from Oltenia to Baragan, where they changed fruits for cereals. Step by step, because of the development of towns, as well as for the growing demands for exportation, the agricultural commodity output appeared.

With all the changes, the labor productivity was low because of using the human and animal force most of all.

Because of the peasant uprisings which reached the highest point in 1907, when in Dambovită district, in Razvad, Comisani, Bucsani, Baleni, Cornatelul communes, also took place important peasant movements, the feudal relations broke up, starting to dissolve the village communities which stopped the private initiative.

The great landed properties were almost exclusively used by lease holders, which finally led to the appearance of a capitalist exploitation.

III. The period between the two World Wars is characterized by:

- The changing of the property structure, because of the agrarian reform from 1921.
- The continuously extension of the agricultural lands to the forests detriment and the growing on a large scale of cereals, technical crops and vegetables; they grew some new crops, such as castor-oil plant, pea and they extend the fruit trees plantations.
- The intensification of animal breeding for meat, milk, and eggs by introducing new productive breeds; in 1921, for the first time in

Romania, at the bulls breeding farm from Runcu (a village in the northern part of the district), it was brought a Schwas breed reproductive material (from Switzerland) for the improvement of the bull breeds from the mountain region.

- The emerging of the agricultural worker, who worked for salary and not for sharecrop.
- The growing of the banks role for loaning the agricultural production and especially the agricultural products trade.
- The introduction on a larger scale of agricultural machinery and the application of modern agricultural technical methods; it was more efficiently used the low and swampy lands from the Arges, Dambovită and Ialomița river meadows by making the first draining workings.
- it was pointed out the outlining of some regions of the district which were based on some certain cultures:
 - Vegetables in Targoviste - Baleni, Gaesti - Puntea de Greci, Crovu - Odobesti and Lunguletu - Slobozia Moara - Brezoale regions, where the production of early potatoes developed.
 - Water melons in Lunguletu - Contesti region.
 - Cereals in Visina region.
 - Fruit trees especially apple trees in Voinesti - Malu cu Flori region.

IV. In the period after the Second World War - until 1989, it took place a new land reform in 1945, when the peasants were given land, but not for a long time, because this period was characterized by the socialist transformation of agriculture.

As part of this program in 1949 they were founded four Collective Farms (G.A.C.) named later Co-operative Farms (C.A.P.). That was the beginning of the process of the forced collectivization of Dambovită agriculture, process which has some important aspects, such as the peasant uprisings from Rascaeti, Visina and Marcesti villages, all of them being bloody repressed.

In 1962 the co-operativization was finished, but the process continued with the gradual diminution of the used plots, the peasants being thus dispossessed of the whole property. After many economical but mostly political and administrative groupings and regroupings it was reached a number of 82 Co-operative Farms which had 137.774 hectares of arable lands, 3.585 hectares of pastures, 2.154 hectares of hayfields, 951 hectares of vineyards and 3.274 hectares of orchards, totaling 147.738 hectares of agricultural land (58% from the district agricultural land).

In 1947, in the state sector, they were founded nine state farms which were depending on the state farms and machine stations administration, which changed in eight agricultural state farms (G.A.S.) named later agricultural state enterprises (I.A.S.).

These units had 37.586 hectares of arable lands, 24.393 hectares of pastures, 1.635 hectares of hayfields, 306 hectares of vineyards and 3.320 hectares of orchards, totaling 67.240 hectares of agricultural land (26% from the district agricultural land).

In the whole district, from the various crops they were distinguished those of maize (36%) wheat and rye (25%) barley and two-row barley (8%), sunflower (5%), Soya bean (4%) and also sugar beet, bean, pea, potatoes and fodder plants.

At the same time, the Machine and Tractor Stations (S.M.T.) developed and changed in Agricultural Machine Stations (S.M.A.).

Beginning with 1980, as a superior form of organization of the socialist agriculture, in the Dambovită district functioned ten state and Co-operative agricultural industrial United Committees.

In the hilly region of the district, there were a great number of individual farms which in spite of the hard conditions, they succeeded to hold out and even to flourish. The individual producers had 9.846 hectares of arable lands, 9.752 hectares of pastures, 14.214 hectares of hayfields, 119 hectares of vineyards and 5.542 hectares of orchards, totaling 39.473 hectares of agricultural lands (16% from the district agricultural land).

In the Dambovită district, there have been founded and still function three research stations: the fruit - growing researches Station from Voinesti (1950), the piscicultural researches Station from Nucet (1941) and the Station for sheep improvement from Bilciuresti (1978).

In spite of the fact that agriculture had a rich and wide variety of machines and agricultural tools, and had done various landed improvement workings (64.000 hectares of draining; 25.000 hectares of irrigation and 13.000 hectares of struggle against soil erosion) and the agricultural production increased very much, the system proved to be failed and collapsed in 1989.

One of the basic error which had done in the process of the cooperativization of agriculture had been the lack of personal interest - the motive for all economical activities.

V. After 1989, from the whole socialist sector there have been founded 47 agricultural trading companies with state capital, with various activities (cultured plants, animal breeding, food industry, mechanization workings and so on) mostly private.

The process of land reform (the law no. 8/1991) began, now, the private sector represents almost 80% from the district agricultural land. This fact determined the breaking up of the agricultural lands in thousands and thousands of parcels, which makes difficult to apply modern technologies, which are specific for a flourishing and high efficiency agriculture. Because of the high degree of urbanization of the district,

almost 40% from the landowners live in towns, their interest for agriculture being on the second place.

In the villages, there have been re-established the chambers of agriculture, where the experts in agriculture work, but only with their advises, the new reconstructed peasant property, can not flourish, the peasants confront the most difficult problems, such as the deficiency of machines and agricultural tools, of fertilizers, pesticides and seeds, as well as their high price.

In 1997, the agricultural land of the district was of 249.796 hectares (62% from the whole area of the district) from which 175.370 hectares of arable lands, 43.226 hectares of pastures, 19.363 hectares of hayfields, 230 hectares of vineyards and 10.607 hectares of orchards.

In comparison with the former period of time, it has been found a diminution of the arable land because of the re-establishment of the communal pastures as well as a diminution of orchards and vineyards because of the high price paid for their services.

The State, as a representative of the whole society, has the responsibility to adopt the necessary measures for the change for the better of this economical branch, which can provide the welfare of the Romanian people.

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