Macrosocial Change, Feminization of Agriculture, and Peasant Women’s Threefold Economic Role
MACROSOCIAL CHANGE, FEMINIZATION OF AGRICULTURE AND PEASANT WOMEN’S THREEFOLD ECONOMIC ROLE

by

Mic. Hafl CERNEA

Agriculture and Rural Development Department
The World Bank, Washington

Within the framework of recent structural changes in Romanian agriculture, namely collectivization, the role-set of women in the changing peasant family is a matter of great relevance for sociological inquiry the family and the developmental process.

It is a current assumption that social change in traditional rural societies is beneficial to women’s development, that it improves their economic situation and reduces their heavy workload. While such an assumption may be true in many cases, it is my contention that the real process is both more complex and often contradictory. This paper will analyze the impact of change in land tenure and production patterns on women in a specific case: the Romanian village in the last 25 years. It will focus on some unpredicted consequences of the macrosocial changes brought about in Romanian agriculture, upon the roles and position of peasant women.

The very rapid pace of industrialization in postwar Romania, as well as the collectivization of the country’s agriculture in less than 15 years (1949-1962), represent the most important and the most far reaching macrosocial changes that have ever happened in Romanian society. They have a multiple impact on family structure, and specifically on the occupational roles of women and their position in family and society. Although industrialization has in many respects changed the structure of the national economy and the social division of labour, agriculture still utilizes almost 49% of the economically active population of Romania (against approximately 75% before 1940).

The analysis of the occupational structure of Romania’s total and agricultural labour force reveals immediately the occurrence and extent of
a major unpredicted phenomenon: the large increase in the number of women working in agriculture. An unusual concept has been coined to describe this process: the feminization of agriculture. The feminization of agriculture is, essentially, the combined consequence of overall collectivization and rapid development of industrial employment opportunities. Though both industrialization and cooperativization of agriculture are the result of centrally planned policies, the actual extent of their impact on the feminization of agriculture was neither intended, nor predicted in advance. This process has become more obvious in the last 12-15 years, during which women have gradually come to provide the main bulk of the labour force employed in Romanian agriculture.

Robert Merton suggested that a certain class of non-anticipated phenomena could be analysed using the general concept of 'latent function' as opposed to 'manifest function' (1959, p. 65). He defined a latent function as an unintended consequence of a social process, unexpected when the process was started, relatively autonomous in respect to the goals desired. It appears that even in a centrally planned society, such unpredicted and unplanned processes do occur. The country's industrialization, the increasing mechanization of basic agricultural structure in the villages have had some profound effects on women, which were not anticipated when collectivization was initiated.

As a result of collectivization, the peasant family has become subject to many structural changes (Cernea, 1969, 1971). Not all of them were unintended: on the contrary, one of the goals of the state's policy was precisely to elicit some of these changes. The macrosocial system was acting deliberately upon the family microsystem in order to transform it, to make it more responsive to the economic and cultural expectations of the macrosystem. Nonetheless it does not follow that everything which happened to family patterns and family roles was anticipated by the policymakers.

The changing position of peasant women can be examined under three headings:
(a) the woman's economic role as a family provider and labour resource;
(b) her status as wife;
(c) her role and influence as mother.

The extent of the trend toward the feminization of agriculture in Romania is really impressive. The assessment of these trends will undermine a quite widespread assumption among sociologists dealing
with the sex-ratios in various contemporary rural societies.

It is still widely thought that in rural areas more males than females are involved in the local labour force; that is to say, agriculture is considered typically as a man’s occupation. For instance, Smith and Zopf (1970, p. 59) considered that “urban woman of most ages have higher rates of involvement in the labour force than do those in farming districts, for agriculture is typically a man’s occupation”. This assumption, however, simply does not hold true for many countries, including Romania or other east-European countries. Smith and Zopf go on to note that “in addition, the potential female labour force in many farming areas is greatly reduced by the large migration of young women to cities, where they do find jobs”. However, it appears that for some European, as well as African countries, male migration to cities is much higher than that of young women.

Another sociologist, Professor Olaf F. Larson (1968, p. 586), in a rather classic article on ‘Rural Society’ published in the International Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences, wrote in the same vein: “The combined effects of differential fertility and differential migration leave the rural areas with a disproportionate burden of dependents, especially children, and a relative shortage of persons in the productive adult years. With the exception of certain Asian and African countries, rural areas have more males than females – particularly at the younger adult ages – because of the selective factor in net migration. These differences in sex ratios reflect the difference in work roles. In the most modernized countries, the greatest opportunity for gainful employment for females is the nonfarm work; the ‘field’ activities are predominately men’s work”.

Despite the rather vague reservation about ‘certain Asian and African countries’ this description is quite inadequate. Traditional agriculture in most African countries below the continent’s northern belt, for instance, was and still is a woman’s activity as much as a man’s one, and often even more so. Wives were, and are, responsible for providing the family’s food crops, with men only helping them. The so called ‘modernization process’ in some instances relieves women of their agricultural tasks. But the process is inherently contradictory, and in many other countries rural development means, among other things, a heavier work burden on the peasant women. The shift from subsistence agriculture to market oriented agriculture often has adverse effects on women, adding to their traditional tasks new ones, namely to help men in cultivating cash crops. But even in some rural societies in which agriculture used to be a predominantly man’s work, the new trends
indicate a reverse of the previous pattern. Romanian agriculture, for instance, as well as that of other East-European countries with a rapidly modernizing agricultural technology, has clearly ceased to be a 'predominantly man's field'. This is particularly significant because of the widespread dogmatic belief that modernization, tractorization and mechanization eliminate women and shifts the agricultural labor force's sex-ratio in favor of men. Empirical facts do not support across the board this outdated sociological contention. The sociological awareness of this new situation, when and where it occurs, is crucial for an understanding of other social (and family) processes which are occurring at the same time.

The very rapid industrialization of Romania (which led to a 30-fold increase in industrial output between 1938 and 1976), absorbed a large number of peasants into urban factories, particularly male peasants. Thus, industrialization called for massive rural out-migration. The latter was favoured by (1) the collectivization of agriculture: this weakened the traditional attachment of peasants to their former privately owned land, thus encouraging them to leave their villages either permanently or temporarily; (2) the widespread introduction of tractors and increasing mechanization of agriculture; this freed a significant proportion of the labour force hitherto engaged in manual work, and encouraged people to look for permanent, non-agricultural employment. With men leaving their family farms and their households for jobs outside the village, the burden placed on women, who had to carry out more and more of the agricultural work once done by their menfolk, constantly increased.

Three main patterns of peasant rural urban-migration can be identified: a) permanent migration of young peasants, the majority of whom are young male peasants, which creates a disequilibrium in the villages' sex-ratio (especially among the under 30s); b) temporary migration of adults, whose families remain in the villages; the majority of these adults is also male; c) permanent migration of entire peasant families. In addition we must mention a fourth category d) the commuters, that is people who live in a village but work in nearby urban industries. Most of these are again males, and most are household heads. As many as an estimated 60%-70% of peasant families have at least one of their male members involved in a movement of type (a), (b) or (d). Type (c) represents, perhaps, 5-7%.

The consequence of the processes mentioned under 'a', 'b' and 'd' is that peasant women constitute for the time being the main agricultural labour force. Table 1, in which 1956 and 1966 census data are con-
Macrosocial Change Feminization

trasted, suggests changes which have occurred during this period in the sex-ratio of the agricultural labour force, in each age group.

TABLE 1 Women in the Agricultural Active Population

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age Groups</th>
<th>Number of women per 100 men</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1956</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>115.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14-19 years</td>
<td>111.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20-24 years</td>
<td>116.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25-29 years</td>
<td>112.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30-39 years</td>
<td>126.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40-49 years</td>
<td>129.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50-54 years</td>
<td>107.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>55-59 years</td>
<td>111.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>60 years and over</td>
<td>97.1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

From this Table it can be seen that the percentage of women in the total active agricultural population is rising in all the age groups (except that of 60 and above). The disequilibrium in sex-ratios between 25-54 is particularly high. Moreover, since the state owned agricultural farms employ an even higher percentage of male than female labour, the sex-ratio discrepancy in the Agricultural Producer Cooperatives (APCs) is even more acute than the Table’s gross figures suggest.

This table also indicates another significant process as well: the aging of the agricultural labor force. Women in the more advanced age groups (40-54) are drawn back into field work on a large scale, and their proportion relative to men in the same old age groups is even higher than in the younger age-groups (the aging of the agricultural labor force encompasses the male force as well.)

After 1966, the trend continued towards a decreasing use of male labor in APCs, primarily because of the higher male outmigration rates. In 1974, men represented 36.8% and women 63.2% of the total labor force employed in all Agricultural Producer Cooperatives (Spornic, 1976 p. 105). No less conclusive than the average country figures are the data about a particular area: the highly industrialized district of Brasov. Research carried out in this district found that the number of women per 100 men working in district APCs rose as follows: 1968 - 148; 1969 - 153 women; 1970 - 166 women. At the level of the national economy, the structure of the employed labor force is also significant. In 1970, of the total economically active male population
48.1% were employed in industry, building and transportation and only 35% in agriculture; in contrast only 16.7% of economically active females were employed in industry, building and transportation, while 65.7% were working in agriculture (Ionescu, 19- p. 101).

Thus, if agriculture is a task to be carried on the shoulders of giants, one could say that nowadays these giants are mainly women. Of course, the feminization of agriculture is not only occurring in Romania. A study undertaken by FAO on the changing socio-economic role of farm women in European agriculture (Barberis, 1972 p. 10-11) noted that it is happening in several European countries, both east and west, and at various rates: e.g., Hungary, Italy, Poland, Turkey, U.S.S.R. and to a certain extent even Federal Germany.

It seems, however, that the highest rates and progressively increasing pace of feminization are to be found in countries where industrial development is accompanied by collectivization of agriculture. Women, who leave farming more slowly than their menfolk, take over a very important amount of the agricultural activities carried out just one or two decades ago by men. The agricultural population, or at least part of it, tends to take on the characteristics of a residual population: those who cannot leave remain in agriculture, which makes the agricultural population prone to dramatic imbalances in sex-ratios and age-ratios.

CHANGING ROLES WITHIN THE PEASANT FAMILY

The considerable involvement of peasant women in agricultural activities outside their family household, together with their husbands' increasing involvement in non-agricultural employment, bring about important changes both in the distribution of roles within the peasant family and in the husband-wife relationship.

Peasant women have not had to take over the entire work load previously carried out by men. The rapid pace of technological change in agriculture due to diffusion of modern machines, fertilizers, pesticides, improved practices, etc. (Cernea et al., 1971) has reduced the amount of labor required for various agricultural operations. This too has a direct impact on family life patterns, as it lays the basis for task reallocation and role-change within the peasant family unit.

Just 25 years ago most of the tasks carried out on the more than 20,000,000 acres of arable land dedicated to agriculture in Romania were performed manually. This meant that a tremendous amount of arduous labor had to be performed by all members of the peasant family, both male and female. Nowadays, the bulk of these tasks on cooperative
farms are mechanized: for example in 1971, 97% of the ploughing, 83% of the sowing, 66% of the hoeing and 99% of the cereal harvesting were done mechanically.

At a first look, one might assume that this revolution in technology would greatly increase the amount of free time available for family companionship. Some sociologists viewed it in this way. But in fact this is not the case, or it is only partly the case. Instead of providing more free time for leisure and companionship, mechanization has been followed by occupational differentiation between husband and wife within agriculture, and by men leaving to take industrial employment. This has led to *spatial separation* between husband and wife during the day and, for many families, even for the entire week.

As a consequence of the macrosocial changes outlined above, and particularly of the feminization of agriculture, women's economic roles are strongly emphasised both as far as the total social system is concerned and especially within Agricultural Producer Cooperatives. Many APCs suffer from a chronic labour shortage and therefore try to persuade their women members to take a larger share in farm activities. This results in a potential and actual contradiction between women's various roles, specifically between a woman's economic function as a labour resource and *provider* for her family, and her other roles – particularly those to do with her activities and educational influence as *mother* and her status as *wife*.

Women are also pressured because of the formal rules governing the APCs, under which each member has the duty to provide a certain minimum amount of work annually (measured in work days or norms), irrespective of their family and household responsibilities. The extent to which these various roles are incompatible, or the *role strain* to which women are subject is demonstrated by the finding of several field investigations that the average amount of work performed by women is less than that performed by men who still work in the APCs. This holds true for many cooperative farms in which individual case-studies were carried out (Belint, Comana, Țară, Grămești, Buciumi) as well as for a country wide research (sample: 120 cooperative farms, with a total membership of 140,000) carried out by the Research Department of the Labour Ministry (Dragan, 1979).

To illustrate this point we can refer to the case study carried out in the APC of Buciumi village (Badina et al., 1970 p. 125). The researchers found that at the lowest levels of work-participation (i.e., number of working days per APC member per year) 72-75% were women. At the higher levels the reverse was the rule.
TABLE 2  *Work Attendance in Buciumi APC*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No. of working days performed</th>
<th>% of those working</th>
<th>% of women working</th>
<th>% of men working</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Under 40 days</td>
<td>22.5</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40-80 days</td>
<td>43.1</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>81-120 &quot;</td>
<td>11.2</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>121-200 &quot;</td>
<td>11.7</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>201-300 &quot;</td>
<td>5.4</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Over 300 &quot;</td>
<td>6.1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>96</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

However, a peasant woman's economic role is not confined merely to her activity on the cooperative farm. She has in fact a threefold economic role, which stems from the peculiar position of the peasant family vis-a-vis the Cooperative farm. It has to be borne in mind that peasant families/households joined the APCs but also continued to operate on a family basis. Thus a woman has to perform a threefold economic role:

1. that of APC member, simultaneously co-owner and laborer in a large-scale agro-enterprise;
2. that of laborer on the family plot, a piece of land assigned by the cooperative to its members for private use;
3. that of housekeeper and manager of the family consumption unit. These are partly complementary and partly crosscutting and conflicting roles, which are intimately interlocked precisely because they are emergents of the family's economic infrastructure. For the time being, the fulfillment of role (3) and the consumption needs of the family compel women to perform both role (2) and (1). If a woman was not fulfill role (1) in the APC, she would run the risk of not being allotted by the APC the family plot or having the existing plot reduced in size. The benefits from cultivating the family's small plot go entirely to the family (they are not shared with the cooperative), which makes this plot very important in the family's economy. However, recent regulations make the allocation and size of this plot dependent on whether the APC members perform their work assignments in the Cooperative's fields. This is why the woman's role (2) depends on her fulfilling role (1). Since there are compelling economic incentives to perform as much as possible in both, this implicitly leads to heavy workloads for the rural women, with possible effects. While the time allocated to role (3) remains more or less constant for most peasant women, the emphasis put by a woman on fulfilling roles (1) and (2) varies according to
whether her husband is working in the APC or is employed in industry. In rural families in which the husband is employed outside the APC, it is the wife’s primary responsibility to perform the work required by the APC from its member families.

There is also the possibility of occasional conflict between the aims of the family and the cooperative farm (Cernea, 1975). Since the family has a vested interest in increasing the output of its family plot so as to trade its products either to the state agencies or on the open market, the family may sometimes withdraw its labour from the cooperative during period of intensive cultivation on the family plot (Constantinescu & Stahl, 1970 p. 39). Thus, the family system may act as both a stimulus to and a brake on the participation of the wife-mother in the socio-economic activities of the AGP, exerting some “control” on it.

The time that women allocate to each of the roles mentioned above may throw light on their actual comparative importance in the real life, as well as on the changes in the sexual division of labour within the peasant family. It has been suggested that the amount of time spent currently by peasant women on the first and third roles should be computed and evaluated. This should allow for a clearer ranking and a differential evaluation of women’s roles as a labor resource, as wife and as mother.

A time budget survey carried out on a sample of 500 peasant families randomly selected from 12 cooperative farms in the Arges district provides very relevant data (Gheorghiu & Sima, 1973; more details in Cernea, 1974, p. 234-239). Time expenditures were recorded under five headings: a) work in the cooperative farm; b) housekeeping and family care, including children’s education; c) work on the family plot; d) permanent employment outside the cooperative; e) seasonal employment outside the cooperative. Time expenditures recorded for each family member by sex and age allowed for a comparison of the roles played by husbands and wives, and more precisely of their differential investments in some common roles. The ecological dimension — whether the cooperative farm was in the mountainous region, in the hill-plain or in the plain area of the district — was taken as an independent variable. The data is graphically summarised in Table 3.

The roles designated under 'b' and 'c' are directly performed within the family group. Roles 'a', 'd', 'e' are all provider roles, but while the role 'a' keeps the family members inside the village and allows them to fulfill roles 'b' and 'c', the remaining provider roles 'd' and 'e' in most cases take one member of the conjugal couple out of the village. The entire burden of the family role thus falls on the one adult (usually the
TABLE 3 ALLOCATION OF WORKTIME BY MEMBERS OF COOPERATIVE FARMS IN VARIOUS AREAS OF THE ARGES DISTRICT

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area</th>
<th>All Members</th>
<th>Men</th>
<th>Women</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>THE MOUNTAIN AREA</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All Members</td>
<td>12.3%</td>
<td>25.2%</td>
<td>45.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>THE HILLY-PLAIN AREA</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All Members</td>
<td>11.0%</td>
<td>31.5%</td>
<td>58.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>THE PLAIN AREA</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All Members</td>
<td>10.3%</td>
<td>23.3%</td>
<td>66.7%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

WORK IN THE COOPERATIVE FARM
HOUSEKEEPING AND CHILDCARE ACTIVITIES
WORK ON THE FAMILY PLOT
PERMANENT WORK OUTSIDE THE COOP
SEASONAL WORK OUTSIDE THE COOP
wife) who remains in the village. Theoretically, each man or woman could accomplish within the span of one year at most 4 of the 5 roles (activities) set out above. In fact in most cases only two or three are accomplished.

By comparing mean time expenditures, some conclusions can be drawn:

1) It is clear that all 5 categories of activities are performed by both males and females; no role is performed exclusively by one sex only.

2) When associated with the ecological variable, the mean time allocation for some roles varies significantly for men. The variations principally derive from the amount of time men spend on permanent and seasonal work outside the local cooperative farm. The figures range from 47%, 33% and 25% for permanent work and 12%, 19% and 22% for seasonal work, depending on geographical area.

3) The amount of time allocated to housekeeping activities (including child care) remains fairly constant for men.

4) For women, the time allocated to various roles is independent of the ecological variable; this is not the case for men and therefore represents a significant difference in time allocation between sexes.

5) Although either men or women in the peasant family may perform all the activities noted above, there is nonetheless a significant difference in their ranking and relative importance. They are ranked as follows:

   **Men**                                      **Women**
   1) Permanent work outside the APC             1) Housekeeping activities
   2) Housekeeping activities                    2) Permanent work outside the APC
   3) Seasonal work outside the APC              3) Family household activities
   4) Family household activities                4) Work in the APC
   5) Work in the APC                            5) Seasonal work outside the APC

6) The amount of time spent on housekeeping activities and childcare outweighs that spent on the other types of activities, taken together. It is from 2.5 to 2.8 times greater than the amount of time their husbands spend on the same activities. Nevertheless, in two out of three ecological areas women still manage to work more than their husbands on the cooperative farms.

Although housework is still very time-consuming, it has diminished in comparison to the precollectivization period, due to the increased use of various labor saving devices. Evidence of this has been provided by several researchers (Cernea et al. 1970; Badina et al., 1970). But the
saving in the women's labor time is not reflected in an increase in their leisure time; rather they are compelled to invest it in undertaking work on the cooperative farm or other seasonal jobs. At the same time, the needs and expectations of the peasant family, for example as to the quality and variety of food, have risen. Therefore, peasant women now spend more of their time preparing varied meals for the family, instead of making one dish which can be served throughout the week. The same sort of change has occurred in respect to women's maternal role, with the new ideas about motherhood and the proper way to raise and care for children. Although the average number of children per peasant family is decreasing this does not diminish the time women spend on childcare. A peasant mother in fact now spends more time on taking better care of fewer children.

By and large then, although a woman's traditional roles of wife (housekeeper) and mother may have changed in content, the time spent on them has not been reduced. Instead, wider social changes, industrialization, collectivization and migration, increase the requirements on a peasant woman's provider role i.e., her economic role(s).

On the other hand, these research data point out the changes in the male role and position within the peasant family. In many peasant families the husband spends a good deal of his time on jobs outside the village and outside the family group. According to the 1966 census, about 30% of village households are headed by an industrial worker; yet these households still contribute, through the activity of another member, to the agricultural work of the village APC. In other households the male peasants work part of the year out of the village and part of it in the village APC. In the temporary/seasonal absence of these male peasant-workers, the authority of the wife-mother within the family group is increasing.

The increase in a woman's decision making authority is thus another characteristic change in her position and roles, both within the family and within the village community. Her increasing authority derives both from her threefold economic role, and from the fact that she now undertakes some aspects of what were traditionally male tasks within the family household, in the absence of her husband. Noticing a similar change in the Polish village, Barbara TRYFAN (1972) suggests that "the definite rise in the authority of women in the family does not result as a sudden change of the men's attitude to the role of the wife as an equal partner, but is the consequence of a determining economic situation... The 'woman's' prestige is positively correlated with the farmers undertaking work outside agriculture" (TRYFAN, p.5).
While this is also true for Romanian village women, I would also add another variable: the authority of the woman within the family has also increased because of the new institutional and organizational framework of the cooperative farm of which she is a member. Her status and authority is positively correlated with her participation in the formal institutional structure of the village — the APC. The cooperative farm as a new, formal village organization, pushes women into a more visible position and frequently institutionalises their role in the organization of farm activities.

In the traditional Romanian peasant family the inequality between husband and wife was enormous; this point needs no elaboration. Both societal and family values and norms reinforced this inequity. Unwritten, but very powerful village norms required a woman to bow to a man and greet him first. A wife was not supposed to walk beside her husband but should follow behind (Niculescu, 1943 p. 70). When the man stopped for a chat with another villager, his wife was expected to stop at a definite distance behind him, not to join in the conversation but wait quietly, and to start walking again only once her husband had set off (Costa Foru, 1945 p. 129). At home she was “the humble servant of her husband, serving all his needs under penalty of being beaten” (Negrea, 1936 p. 45). Advanced pregnancy was not a justification for stopping work, and giving birth in the fields was reported to be a common occurrence.

The fact that this situation is now changing cannot of course be attributed only to the development of the cooperative farm; changes in the values and ideology of the peasant family have also occurred. The macrosocial and cultural changes in Romanian society have promoted such changes in the value system and institutionally supported them. The cooperative farm as an organization included from the outset among its by-law principles the rule of equality between men and women. But it is obvious that change in this respect cannot be achieved just by stating moral and organizational principles. People in charge of implementing these rules are themselves overwhelmingly male peasants, husbands, subject to the burden of traditional prejudices.

However, the organizational and economic structure of the producer cooperative itself has a particular impact on this critical point, by means of institutionalizing women’s participation and paying them directly for farmwork. That is to say that the previous pattern of the individual family farm prevented a wife’s distinct contributions to its welfare from being measured: this favored and strengthened the position of the family head, who was the owner of the fruit of the family’s toil. Now,
on the contrary, each cooperative farm member's input of work and the corresponding forms of payment are computed on an individual basis, whatever the person's family status may be. This has made distinct and visible a woman's work outside her own household and her contribution to her family's earnings?. Everyone sees and knows the size of each person's share, male or female, old or young.

Instead of remaining just an anonymous auxiliary to her husband, the wife is thus recognised socially by the APC system as a family breadwinner. This is a tremendous change which enhances the partnership status of the wife, favors more independent behaviour of women and creates conditions which will promote, in the long run, their equal status with men within the family group.

It would be naive to believe that obstacles derived from the traditional system of values, the lingering customs and traditions are no longer formidable constraints on the emancipation of peasant women. There are also some other contradictions within women's economic roles in the producer cooperative which I cannot elaborate on here: for instance, women hold far fewer executive positions (either top or middle rank) in the administrative hierarchy of the farms than men. Research has also shown that, comparatively, they participate less often than men in the various administrative and social institutions of the village. In sum, despite the major progress which has been made, women still have fewer opportunities than men do to assert themselves in the APC and in the village community. Their educational level is lower than that of men: only 15% have some professional training in comparison with 40% of men in the same age groups.

In conclusion it can be said that, along with the obvious and rapid structural and technological changes that have taken place, the improvement of peasant women's status within the peasant family is subject to both 'old' and 'new' constraints. Development not only improves women's lot, but also emphasizes their various economic roles in ways which may lead also to too taxing demands on their time and efforts. The strategy of rural development should check the 'new' constraints and imbalances, thus preventing contradictory and counterproductive efforts. On the other hand, despite economic development, peasant women are still held back by traditional submission to their menfolk. Even under circumstances of radical macrosocial change, it appears that a long time will be needed to alter both their economic roles and situation in the peasant household and the cultural values that are hindering change.
NOTES

1 About 90% of peasant families have been grouped into APCs – Agricultural Production Cooperatives (Cooperative Agricola de Productie). These comprise about 94.1% of the arable land belonging to peasants – state farms not included (see Statistical Yearbook, 1975, p. 152, Bucharest).

2 A similar sociological blindness has prevented, until recently, other fields of sociology to recognize the economic roles of women in urban families: despite the rapidly increasing labour force involvement of married women, sociologists have usually assumed "women's socioeconomic role in the family to be minimal" (Oppenheimer, 1977).

3 The individual family plot provides additional produce for the peasant family. It is left for private use in order to provide the family an opportunity to grow vegetables of its choice, as well as other crops for family consumption and additional family income. The products may be sold on the market, thus giving the family a strong incentive for intensive cultivation of the small family plot.

4 By Reuben Hill, during the discussion of the first version of this paper at the XII International Family Seminar, April 1972.

5 The same social mechanism works in the case of the young nonmarried family members, whose independence and rights within the structure of the family group are thus to some extent economically and juridically substantiated.

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The structural changes in Romanian agriculture in the last 25 years generated major consequences at both the macrosocial and microsocial (family) level. All of them directly affected peasant women. A combined consequence of overall collectivization of agriculture, rapid broadening of industrial employment opportunities and heavy rural-urban migration was the feminization of the agricultural labor force; the sex ratio of the labor force employed by Agricultural Producer Cooperatives in 1974 was 36.8% men to 63.2% women. The paper discusses and challenges the widespread contention that agriculture is typically a man’s occupation. These radical macrosocial changes have a direct impact on changing the role set of women within the peasant family. There is an increasing occupational differentiation during the work process and spatial separation over the day, between husband and wife, compared with the traditional peasant family pattern. The women’s economic role in the family is threefold: (1) labourer in a large scale cooperative enterprise; (2) producer on the family plot; (3) manager of the family consumption unit. Her roles as wife and mother are also affected, and improvements in her status are accompanied by both ‘old’ and ‘new’ constraints.

Résumé

Les changements structuraux à l'intérieur de l'agriculture roumaine dans les 25 dernières années entraînaient des conséquences importantes aussi bien sur le niveau (familial) macrosocial que microsocial. Toutes
concernaient directement les femmes de la société rurale. Le fait, que la main d'œuvre agricole est composée de plus en plus par des femmes, était une conséquence, qui résultait des trois données suivantes: la transformation de l'agriculture en collectivités; l'accroissement rapide des possibilités de trouver un emploi dans l'industrie; la désertion fréquente des campagnes vers les villes. La relation du personnel de la "coopérative de production agricole" était en 1974 36,8% d'hommes contre 63,2% de femmes. Cet article discute et conteste cette opinion répandue, selon laquelle l'agriculture serait une activité essentiellement masculine. Ces bouleversements radicaux dans le domaine macrosocial ont une influence directe sur le changement du rôle de la femme à l'intérieur de la famille paysanne. Une différenciation accrue du travail ainsi que la séparation de son mari pendant la journée peuvent être constatées. Ceci est en opposition avec le modèle traditionnel de la famille paysanne. Le rôle économique de la femme à l'intérieur de la famille se divise en trois parties: (1) travail dans une grande entreprise coopérative; (2) production à l'intérieur de la ferme familiale; (3) direction de la consor-tiation de l'unité familiale. Leurs rôles comme épouse et mère en sont également affectés et des améliorations de leur positions sont accompagnées aussi bien 'd'anciennes' que de 'nouvelles' contraintes.
in Gegensatz zu dem traditionellen Muster einer Bauernfamilie. Die wirtschaftliche Rolle der Frau innerhalb der Familie teilt sich in drei Teile auf: (1) Arbeit in einem großen genossenschaftlichen Unternehmen; (2) Produktion innerhalb der familieneigenen Landwirtschaft; (3) Leitung des Konsums der Familieneinheit. Ihre Rollen als Ehefrau und Mutter werden davon auch tangiert und Verbesserungen ihres Status werden sowohl von 'alten' als auch von 'neuen' Zwängen begleitet.
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