

Aspects of Romanian Life under Communism

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Communism started as a governing ideology in Romania on March 8th, 1947 when the Romanian communist party was formed. In a three year period, starting in 1959 and ending in 1962, Romania's communists began a program for confiscation of the land owned villagers. Conditions worsened when Nicolae Ceausescu became Romania's leader in March 1965.

He began an intense program for the industrial development of Romania and a major intensification of agricultural work. His ambitious policies also called for construction of new houses and the production of cars for civilian use. Rural residents who did not own land were forcibly moved into cities.

In 1980 Ceausescu initiated plans to develop the Dunăre - Marea Neagra (Black Sea) canal, which became the 3rd largest such program worldwide at that time. Construction began for a subway network in Bucharest and for more apartment blocks. At this time, Ceausescu's dream of building the "biggest house" in the world - known by the name of "Casa Poporului" - took shape.

These ambitious efforts were expensive and partially offset by a rationing system for most foods including items, such as sugar, cooking oil, gas and bread. People who lived in cities were to receive 45 liters of gas per month while those from the countryside would receive only 15 liters. Use of automobiles were rigidly licensed using a system based on even and uneven numbers on license plates and owners were allowed to drive only on those specific days.

Food was distributed for each person only upon presentation of a valid ID card. Allowances were limited for most goods with people being allowed to have 500 grams of bread per day, 15 eggs, 3 kg of meat each month, 1.5 liter of cooking oil, and 1 kilogram of sugar per month.

During Romania's communist period men were supposed to go to the army for one year and four months. People who were older than 27 years old but still childless had to pay a penalty of 185 lei (lei; around 50\$). This money would be spent on foster homes. People who were unemployed but healthy risked going to jail for 6 months because authorities accused them of simply refusing to work.

Families with one child were entitled to a homes of a certain size while, those with two or more children were awarded larger apartments. A person who wanted to buy a car had to wait for a period of 5 years while they depositing money into an automobile account. This money was used only for a Romanian Dacia as buying foreign cars was banned. If you made the mistake of criticizing this restrictive system or its leader you would face severe punishment. Workers routinely spent ten hours per day at work and Sunday was often simply another day of work. Women were not allowed to get abortions unless already had at least four children or suffered from medical problems preventing giving birth.

In 1985, some villages were destroyed to make more room for agriculture land and people were moved to the city. Despite these hardships, the communist authorities boasted their system was providing food and jobs for everybody.