

# **SOCIALIST SOCIAL JUSTICE AND RESIDUAL COMMUNISM IN ROMANIA AFTER A DECADE OF TRANSITION: A Secondary Analysis**

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*The study is based on secondary analysis of an opinion poll. The sample had 37474 persons and it was representative both at the national level (with a +/- 3% error) and at the county level (with a +/-4% error). The public opinion poll was carried out by the Urban and Regional Sociology Center (CURS) in November 1999. According to the secondary analysis methodology, the results of the opinion poll were used to study a different problem than the one for which the data was collected. The target concepts were "socialist social justice" (the positive considerations of the principle of equality in the resources distribution and state intervention in economy) and "residual communism" (the positive consideration of the communist principles in the context of its disappearance as the unique and leading force in Romania). The results show that the population over 18 years old in Romania is attached to the socialist social justice in a proportion almost double than the population of the developed capitalist states (United States, United Kingdom, Germany at the level of 1991) and almost 1,5 times bigger than the population of some ex-communist states (Bulgaria, Czechoslovakia, Russia, Hungary, in 1996). At the national level almost half of the population over 18 years old considers as fair the socialist social justice and almost a third of the electorate is characterized by a 'residual communism' type of mentality. The historical regional distribution of the two phenomena (socialist social justice and residual communism) reveals differences which plead in favor of regional sociological research. Thus, the design of a Romanian Social Map would be more useful. The study - the first of the kind in Romania - reveals the advantages as well as disadvantages of the secondary analysis in social researches.*

## **Theoretical and Methodological Issues**

The study seeks to reveal the value of secondary analysis of the data from opinion polls as well as the meaning of regional studies aimed at the elaboration of a Social Book of Romania. At the same time the study signals the difficulties of the post-communist transition and the pace of peoples' attitudes. I made a secondary analysis of the data of the opinion poll carried out in November 1999 by the Urban and Regional Sociology Center (see D. Abraham, 2001). However, our attempt requires the explanation of some methodological problems.

It is well known that the secondary analysis is applied on data produced with a different goal than the one envisaged by the initial researcher (Chelcea, 2000, p. 102). Concretely, the CURS poll did not follow either the social justice topic, or that of residual communism. Nevertheless, several closed questions concerning social values were introduced. We analyzed the distribution of 'total disagreement', 'total agreement', 'I don't know/don't answer' answers. We selected the 'total agreement' answer with the statement 'the state is obliged to ensure everybody a work place and a decent living standard' as indicator for the socialist social justice.

The term 'social justice' is used in social psychology to explain 'what people think is fair or unfair, just or unjust, as well as the way in which people justify these judgments' (Tyler, Boeckmann, Smith and Huo, 1997, 4). It is an ideal nature entity, it exists as an idea in our mind. Tom R. Tyler and co. introduced an important distinction by considering separately the *objective justice*, the concrete way of allocating resources, and *subjective justice*, what people think about the principles which regulate these allocations. In what follows we will solely refer to the subjective social justice which derives of course from the objective justice. A special form of the social justice is the *distributive justice*, which signifies "the rules that define the way in which the resources of a group are distributed among its members" (Kellerhals, 1993/1996, 147). Three principles of distributing goods and resources were identified: the principle of equality, equity and needs (Deutsch, 1975, 1985). These principles vary according to the following dimensions: the nature of the distributed goods (incomes, objects, opportunities etc.), the subjects to whom these resources are distributed (persons, groups, social classes etc.) and the criteria according to which the distribution of goods and services is made ( in accordance with some personality features, market transactions etc.) (Lamont, 1996/1997, 1).

Robert E. Lane (1986) suggested the term 'market justice' in order to measure the preference for the inequality of recompense and for the limiting of the state intervention in economy. The justice characteristic for the market-based societies - we prefer the term 'capitalist justice' - is opposed to the socialist social justice based on the equal distribution principle and presupposes the state intervention in economy. The indicator which we used is a secondary-analytical indicator equivalent with the ones used in the international comparative research coordinated by James R. Klueggel, David S. Mason and Bernard Wegener (1999). In this research three statements were formulated regarding the state intervention while the respondents were

supposed to express their opinion: 'total disagreement', 'total agreement', 'neither agreement, nor disagreement', 'agreement', 'full agreement'. We reproduce here the three statements: 'the government should (1) guarantee each citizen a decent living standard; (2) impose a maximum personal income limit; (3) ensure work places for all citizens'. From a methodological point of view, the problem which arises is the one of functional equivalence of the indicators. The indicators 'full agreement' associated with the statements 'the government should guarantee each citizen a decent living standard' and 'the government should ensure work places for all citizens' are interchangeable with the indicator 'total agreement' associated to the following statements: "Should the state ensure work places and decent standard of living for all citizens?" We do not only envisage the equivalence of the terms 'government' and 'state', 'should' and 'must', or whether the conjunction 'work place' and 'decent standard of living' is logically justified, but also the fact that in the international research for each statement a neutral answer was also included ('neither agreement, nor disagreement') while in the CURS poll only two pro or con answers were possible. Moreover, the answer 'agreement' only with an approximation error could be assimilated to the answer 'quite agreement'. Obviously we do not have a total equivalence of the terms, but functionally they have a close value. This limitation is though one particular characteristic of the secondary analysis.

In the initial research the data were not collected either to facilitate international comparison or to measure the socialist social justice and the residual communism. In order to determine the latter we only considered one indicator: the answer 'total agreement' to the statement 'communism was a good idea but which was transferred into practice in the wrong way'. The term 'residual communism' which is widely used in political science has undoubtedly a richer content and its being made operational supposes the use of a set of indicators and not just one indicator. If it is true that in the secondary analysis 'oftentimes more indicators need to be combined in various ways to represent the concept' (Kiecolt and Nathan, 1985, 52) then it is just as true that sometimes we use from a prior research only one indicator to measure a phenomenon. As R. Guy Sedlack and Jay Stanley (1992, 281) noted the main limit of the secondary analysis lies in the measurement compromises generated by taking into account several defining indicators with a lower discriminatory power, the establishment of debatable functional equivalents of the indicators and the ignorance of the differences of the data collection process we are aware of, the social context and even the period

during which the field research took place. We admit in practice a difference of several years if the influence of the socio-historical context has not changed significantly. This is even more valid for the international comparative search (Gremy, 1972, 58).

### Opinions about the Distributive Justice: Comparative International Analysis

The meaning of the distributive justice can be caught by a system of questions: “Who distributes, what and to whom, according to which criteria, through which procedures and with what distributive result?” (Lane, 1986, 385). We will first deal with the agent of the distribution.

**Table 1.** The appreciation of the state as distributive agent, in percentages (after Kluegel, Mason and Wegener, 1999, 280; The CURS public opinion poll, 1999)

Year of the survey Indicator	WG 91	US 91	UK 91	BG 96	CZ 96	HU 96	RU 96	ED 96	RO 1999
‘Agreement’ and ‘full agreement’ that ‘the Government should ensure work places for all its citizens’	46	38	37	72	50	78	77	73	...
‘Agreement’ and ‘full agreement’ that ‘the Government should guarantee each citizen a decent standard of living’	57	27	50	76	62	55	74	64	...
‘Quite agreement’ and ‘total agreement’ that ‘The State should ensure a work place and a decent living standard for all	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	80

Note: The data of the CURS opinion poll from November 1999 appear in the RO (1) column. For other countries we maintained the international symbols: WG = West Germany, US = United States of America, UK = United Kingdom, BG = Bulgaria, CZ = Czechoslovakia, HU = Hungary, RU = Russia, ED= East Germany.

According to the socialist social justice the main agent of distribution should be the state and government. According to the capitalist social justice, the distribution of goods ought to be regulated by the market. The sociological researches carried out on representative samples in the USA (Lipset and Schneider, 1983; McClosky and Zaller, 1985), as well as the international comparative studies (Kluegel, Mason and Wegener, 1999) revealed that the majority of the population in the capitalist countries appreciate as positive the market intervention, but not of the state in order to “give everyone a fair chance” (65%), the market being an “efficient and fair system” (63%) (McClosky and Zaller, 1985, apud Lane, 1986, 385). In five ex-communist countries the opinion poll made in 1996 under the coordination of James R. Kluegel, David S. Mason (USA) showed that between 50 and 75% of the over 18 years old population in each country appreciate that the government should ensure work places for all citizens and an even higher proportion (between 55 and 80%) thinks that the government should guarantee each citizen a decent living standard. The answers to the same questions asked in a research made in 1991 in three developed capitalist countries suggest that the governments’ intervention to ensure work places and decent standard of living is expected by a reduced proportion of the population: between 37% and 47% in so far as the work place ensuring is concerned and between 27% and 50% with respect to the decent standard of living ensuring.

Which are the opinions of the Romanian citizens regarding the role of the government as agent of distribution of goods and services? The data from the public opinion polls are presented in table 1. After ten years of post-communist transition approximately 80 percent of the Romanian citizens do not seem to have understood that in a market economy the state has no longer the role of distributive agent. The proportion of those who prefer the socialist social justice is almost 1,5 time bigger than the proportion of the other ex-communist countries population (at the level of 1996) and almost twice bigger than the proportion of the developed capitalist countries (at the 1991 level).

### **Socialist Social Justice**

We would like to analyze in what follows the socio-demographic characteristics of the persons who accept without any doubt the principle of state intervention for accomplishing the social justice and which are attached more to the socialist social justice than to the capitalist one. The data of the CURS opinion poll (No. 1999) lead us to the conclusion that out of 37474

interviewed persons 18630 (49.7%) have expressed their total agreement with the statement “the state should ensure a work place and a decent standard of living for all its citizens”. These would constitute according to the secondary analysis design the population of the representative sample at the district and national level which after ten years of post-communist transition prefer the socialist social justice.

Women accept in a larger proportion the principle of the state as distributive agent intervention (52.8 as opposed to 47.2%). At all age categories the female population prevails. The biggest difference is recorded for the 31-55 years old category (Table 2)

**Table 2.** The population attached to the socialist social justice according to sex and age groups (N=18612)

Age (in full years) Gender	18- 30	%	31- 55	%	56 and over	%	Total	%
Male	1 863	48.3	3 868	46.8	3 055	47.1	8 786	47.2
Female	1 994	51.7	4 404	53.2	3 428	52.9	9 826	52.8
Total	3 857	100.0	8 272	100.0	6 483	100.0	18 612	100.0

In the CURS sample women represented 50.9%: in the category of persons attached to the socialist justice (sub-sample JSS) women represent 52.8%. Although the difference does not exceed the sampling error, it does sustain though that women positively valorize more than men the socialist social justice. Proportionally between those who accept the principle of the state intervention in the distribution of goods and services we find 3% more persons aged 56 or over and 2% less of young persons (Table 3).

**Table 3.** The CURS sample structure according to age groups compared to the sub-sample of those who expressed their total agreement with the state's duty to ensure a work place and a decent life standard to all its citizens.

Age (in full years)	CURS Sample	%	JSS sub-sample	%
18-30 years	8 478	22.6	3 857	20.7
31-55 years	17 020	45.4	8 272	44.4
56 years and over	11 933	31.8	6 483	34.8
Total	37 474	100.0	18 612	100.0

As educational level increases, the proportion of those who declare their total agreement with the fact that the state has a duty to ensure everybody a work place and a decent standard of living decreases. Persons having graduated an elementary school, secondary school or vocational school are proportionally more numerous in the JSS sample than in the CURS sample while the high-school graduates, post-high-school or university education graduates are less numerous. For example, the persons with university degree represent in the JSS sample with 4% less than in the CURS sample, while the elementary school graduates with 3% more.

Also the present occupation of the respondents introduces a certain differentiation in the sense that the specialists who carry an intellectual activity are proportionally less in the JSS sub-sample (4,2%) than in the CURS sample (7,3%) while the retired people (30,8% as opposed to 28,4%) and housewives ((,4% as opposed to 8,2%) are over-represented in a greater proportion in the CURS sample, compared to the JSS sub-sample.

The data of the opinion poll (CURS, No. 1999) lead to the conclusion that women, elderly people and those with a low educational level manifest a powerful attachment towards the socialist social justice principles.

### **Residual Communism**

A decade after the fall of communism as a political system in Romania, more than half of the over 18 years old population seems to have the "nostalgia" of the past. Approximately 57 percent of the persons included in

the CURS sample appreciate communism as a good idea, but wrongly put into practice. (Table 4)

**Table 4.** The structure according to the education level of the CURS sample compared to the structure of the sub-sample of those who expressed their total agreement with the statement: “The state should ensure a work place and a decent standard of living to all its citizens”

Education level	CURS sample	%	JSS Sample	%
No education	662	1.8	386	2.1
Elementary school	4 888	13.1	2 883	15.6
Secondary school	8 337	22.4	4 842	26.1
Vocational school	7 806	20.9	4 144	22.4
High-school	9 658	25.9	9 315	23.3
Post-high-school	2 551	6.8	1 049	5.7
University college studies	3 367	9.0	919	5.0
Total	37 267 <sup>(a)</sup>	100.0	18 538 <sup>(b)</sup>	100.0

Note: (a) 207 persons did not specify their education level. (b) 74 persons did not specify their education level

The number of persons who declare their total agreement with the fact that the communist system was a good idea, but wrongly put into practice is double as compared to the persons who are totally disagreeing with the above-mentioned statement. We stress that one in ten interviewed person, either does not answer this or declares that he/she does not realize whether communism was or not a good idea, but wrongly put into practice.

Let me turn to the the socio-demographic features of the communism nostalgic persons. I assumed that only the persons who have totally agreed with the fact that the communist system was a good idea wrongly transferred into practice are characterized by residual communism. They represent approximately one third of all the interviewed persons (Table 5).



**Table 5.** The agreement/disagreement degree with the statement “Communism was a good idea but which was wrongly put into practice” (N=37474)

Answers	No.	%
Total disagreement	6 733	18.0
Quite disagreement	5 175	13.8
Quite agreement	8 900	23.7
Total agreement	12 511	33.4
I don't know/ don't answer	4 155	11.1

Gender does not generate significant statistical differences in so far as the communist nostalgia is concerned. But on age groups there are visible tendencies which could be interpreted as communist nostalgia more powerful for people over 56 years old as compared to the young. (Table 6).

**Table 6.** The structure on age groups of the CURS sample as compared with the sub-sample of those who expressed their total agreement with the statement “Communism was a good idea but which was wrongly put into practice”

Age (in full years)	CURS Sample	%	CIB sub-sample	%
18-30 years	8 478	22.6	2 398	19.2
31-55 years	17 020	45.4	5 864	46.9
56 years and over	11 933	31.8	4 236	33.9

Note: a. 13 persons did not express their opinion about this problem. According to the education level we perceive a more powerful communist nostalgia among the persons who have graduated a vocational school, compared to those who have graduated from colleges or universities. (Table 7).

**Table 7.** The structure according to the education level of the CURS sample compared to the one of the sub-sample of those who have expressed their total agreement with the statement “Communism was a good idea but which was wrongly put into practice”

Education level	CURS sample	%	JSS Sample	%
No education	662	1.8	231	1.9
Elementary school	4 888	13.1	1 858	14.9
Secondary school	8 337	22.4	3 046	24.5
Vocational school	7 806	20.9	2 851	22.9
High-school	9 658	25.9	3 018	24.2
Post-high-school	2 551	6.8	733	5.9
University college studies	3 367	9.0	721	5.8
Total	37 267 <sup>(a)</sup>	100.0	12 458 <sup>(b)</sup>	100.0

Note: a. 207 persons did not specify their education level; b. 74 persons did not specify their education level

Just as in the case of the attachment towards the socialist social justice, the communist nostalgia is more powerful among peasants/farmers and workers, than in the case of persons who practice intellectual professions (specialists having intellectual occupations).

We can conclude according to the CURS survey data that among the elderly people, the persons with a reduced education level or who practice predominantly physical activities the residual communism can be found in a greater proportion.

### **Socialist Social Justice and Residual Communism in Romania: Comparative Cross-regional Analysis**

The distribution on historical regions of the persons who are attached to the socialist social justice and who manifest a residual communism display a

**Table 8.** The proportion of the answers “Total agreement” with the statements 11 and 12 according to historical regions (in percentages)

Region	Moldova	Muntenia	Dobrogea	Oltenia	Banat	Transilvania	Crisana Maramures	Bucuresti
The state should ensure a work place and a decent standard of living to all its citizens (I <sub>1</sub> )	52.4	53.1	59.8	58.2	52.4	45.0	40.1	41.0
Communism was a good idea but was wrongly put into practice (I <sub>2</sub> )	38.5	34.9	50.2	40.1	35.3	25.0	25.4	29.2

Note: The proportion of the answers “Total agreement” at 11 for the whole sample is 49,7%; The proportion of the answers “Total agreement” at 12 for the whole sample is 33,4%

In three regions (Dobrogea, Moldova and Oltenia) the proportion of those who agree with the socialist social justice surpasses the proportion for the whole sample; in two regions (Banat and Muntenia) the proportion is approximately equal to the one of the whole sample, and finally, in two regions (Crisana-Maramures and Transilvania) the proportions of persons attached to the socialist social justice is more reduced, than at the level of the whole sample. Bucharest is part of this last category . Almost the same thing happens with the regional distribution of what we called ‘residual communism’: two historical regions (Dobrogea and Oltenia) surpass the national mean, three regions (Banat, Moldova and Muntenia) are approximately at the same level with the proportion established at the level of the whole sample, two regions (Crisana-Maramures and Transilvania), as well as Bucharest are to be found below this level .

Within the historical regions, there are cross-county differences, in so far as the preference for the socialist social justice and residual communism are concerned. To exemplify this we could refer to Moldova. Out of the eight

districts which compose the historical region we refer to here, in three of them (Botosani, Galati and Valsui) the proportion of those who declare their total agreement with the statement: “the state should ensure a work place and a decent standard of living to all its citizens” is higher than the mean of the answers for Moldova. In four districts (Bacau, Neamt, Suceava, Vrancea) the proportion is lower than the regional mean. Finally, in the Iași district the proportions of the answers “total agreement” with the abovementioned affirmation is close to the regional mean. Such analyses can be made for each historical region separately. Nevertheless we will not insist upon this here. We point out though the *model of the analysis*: the inter-district comparison within each region reveals more subtly the local differences rather than the comparison with the overall situation in the whole country. (Table 9)

**Table 9.** The distribution on districts of the answers “total agreement” with the statements: “The state should ensure a work place and a decent standard of living to all its citizens” (11) and “Communism was a good idea but which was wrongly put into practice” (12) (in percentages).

	Districts	I <sub>1</sub>	I <sub>2</sub>		Districts	I <sub>1</sub>	I <sub>2</sub>
1.	Alba	34.0	15.1	21.	Harghita	49.7	35.6
2.	Arad	28.0	12.3	22.	Hunedoara	39.7	21.7
3.	Arges	54.8	35.8	23.	Ialomita	59.5	33.0
4.	Bacau	39.4	35.7	24.	Iasi	55.1	39.2
5.	Bihor	22.4	15.6	25.	Maramures	41.9	35.3
6.	Bistrita-Nasaud	65.1	31.1	26.	Mehedinti	66.3	54.7
7.	Botosani	63.1	41.0	27.	Mures	54.3	30.5
8.	Braila	56.0	35.2	28.	Neamt	43.1	32.5
9.	Brasov	39.5	24.2	29.	Olt	52.5	38.0
10.	Buzau	58.5	39.0	30.	Prahova	46.7	36.2
11.	Calarasi	35.9	29.4	31.	Salaj	57.9	38.6
12.	Caras-Severin	53.2	38.2	32.	Satu Mare	38.8	22.4
13.	Cluj	38.9	13.6	33.	Sibiu	46.4	28.0
14.	Constanta	60.9	57.6	34.	Suceava	44.7	19.7
15.	Covasna	22.4	12.3	35.	Teleorman	64.4	47.4
16.	Dambovita	49.7	21.7	36.	Tulcea	58.5	41.5
17.	Dolj	67.4	49.9	37.	Valcea	48.6	24.6
18.	Galati	66.9	50.3	38.	Vaslui	66.9	67.4
19.	Giurgiu	53.0	36.1	39.	Vrancea	38.2	20.4
20.	Gorj	55.5	33.0	40.	Bucuresti	41.0	29.2

The data presented in table 9 lead us to conclude that there are seventeen districts in which the majority of the electorate (the population over 18 years old) adheres to the socialist social justice . And four districts where the residual communism is prevailing. In Vaslui district, for example, over two thirds of the population having the right to vote positively appreciate the socialist social justice and consider that the communist idea was good but that its transfer into practice was wrong. At the other extreme there are the districts of Bihor and Covasna where less than one fourth of the population manifests any attachment towards the socialist social justice and only one out of ten respondents claim that the communist idea was good, but wrongly put into practice. Our research revealed the correlation between the attachment towards the principles of the socialist social justice and residual communism. There is a strong statistically significant correlation between the forming of hierarchies with respect to districts according to the percentage of the persons who have expressed their attachment towards the socialist social justice (11) and to the proportion of the ones characterized by what we have called “the residual communism” (12). The Spearman coefficient has a value of 0,837; this is an extremely significant correlation for  $p=0,01$ . On the other hand, the Chi-square test reveals a correlation statistically significant between the answers to the questions checking if they agree that the state owes to ensure work places for all its citizens (11) and that the idea communicated would have been a good one but that it was wrongly transferred into practice (12).

I <sub>1</sub>		I <sub>2</sub>					
		Total dis- agreement	Rather dis- agreement	Quite agreement	Total agreement	Don't know / don't answer	Total
	Total disagreement	1 108 (3%)	1 405 (3.7%)	1 961 (5.2%)	2 149 (5.7%)	110 (0.3%)	6 733 (18%)
	Rather disagreement	161 (0.44%)	1 180 (3.1%)	2 325 (6.2%)	1 481 (4%)	28 (0.1%)	5 175 (13.8%)
	Quite agreement	150 (0.42%)	876 (2.3%)	4 210 (11.2%)	3 589 (9.6%)	75 (0.23%)	8 900 (23.7%)
	Total agreement	349 (0.9%)	613 (1.6%)	1 872 (5%)	9 615 (25.7%)	62 (0.21%)	12 511 (33.4%)
	Don't know / don't answer	79 (0.2%)	234 (0.6%)	1 169 (3.1%)	1 796 (4.8%)	877 (2.3%)	4 155 (11.1%)
	Total	1 847 (4.9%)	4 308 (11.5%)	11 527 (30.8%)	18 630 (49.7%)	1 152 (3.1%)	37 474 (100%)

## Conclusions

Our approach leads to several methodological and evaluative conclusions in so far as the transition to the market economy and the western-type democracy is concerned. From the methodological point of view we stress the value of the secondary analysis of opinion poll surveys. During the ten years of post-communist transition research there was collected data which could say more than what they had said when they were examined the first time. The "mountain" of data waits for its "mouse". The play-upon-words sends to the French anthropologist and sociologist Marcel Mauss ( In German 'maus' means 'mouse'), who selected and ordered the suicides statistics (25000 cases registered in France between 1889 and 1891) used by Emile Durkheim to write his famous sociological essay *Le Suicide* (1897), masterly proving that apparently individual facts are part of the social determination whole. In so far as I am concerned, I consider that the option for the socialist social justice and residual communism have a social-economic determination and cannot be explained by employing psycho-individual factors. Poverty and uncertainty of the next day make many people regret the fall of communism. The map of the residual communism overlaps on the poverty map.

Also from the methodological perspective the secondary analysis we made revealed the inconsistency of the approaches based on nationally representative samples. The problem with this approach is that it overgeneralizes. In order to get a more correct spatial distribution of the various social phenomena, such as the positive valuing of the socialist social justice and communist idea, regional studies are necessary as well as the elaboration of a Social Map. In so far as the post-communist transition in Romania is concerned, the data reveal its weakness and the mentalities' inertia. As opposed to the developed capitalist countries - as it was normal - but also as opposed to other ex-communist countries the situation of Romania is a particular one by the attachment of a large part of the population (80%) which agrees with the socialist social justice. At the national level, almost half of the population of 18 years old and over positively values the socialist social justice and approximately one third of the electorate is characterized by residual communism. The secondary analysis revealed that there is a significant statistically relevant correlation between the preference for the socialist social justice and residual communism.