

Vlad Onaciu
Babes-Bolyai University, Cluj-Napoca

Surviving Shortage: How Romanian Comrades Created Their Alternative Economy in the '60s and '70s

One of the defining traits of communist regimes was shortage in all economic sectors. In this regard, Romania has remained one of the most representative examples, especially due to the insistence of a Stalinist model of development.

This paper aims to look at how Romanian citizens created their own system in order to ameliorate their everyday situation. We shall follow three steps so as to achieve the proposed objective. Firstly, it is essential to define the alternative economy as a concept aimed at encompassing a broad spectrum of social and economic phenomena. The second issue put under analysis will be “bureaucratic blat”, which marked an adaptation or reshaping of the qualifications of individuals by hiring them to positions with little regard to their education and skills. Thirdly, we must present the underground economy of the 1970s as a place of unofficial commerce, as represented by smuggling of jewelry and precious metals, and stealing from or using resources from the workplace.

Through the research proposed here we wish to create a broader understanding of how economic shortages in communist regimes led to further undermining by the alternative economy created to balance individual needs.