

**“The Vanquished of the Reform.”**  
**Extrajudicial Forms of Contesting of Agrarian Legislation in the**  
**Romanian Village after World War I (1918-1921).**  
**Case Study: Iași County**  
(Abstract)

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The agrarian reform was the most eagerly awaited piece of legislation by the Romanian peasantry. Amidst a period of profound social distress and significant setbacks during the First World War, the Romanian leadership, particularly through King Ferdinand’s speech at Răcăciuni in April 1917, pledged arable land and voting rights to the army primarily composed of peasants. Nevertheless, the initial years of the interwar period, marked by social and economic instability, did not permit a thorough and radical redistribution of land, which deeply disappointed the rural population.

The primary objective of this study is to examine instances in which villagers, dissatisfied with the delayed allocation of individual plots, opposed the implementation of the agrarian reform using various methods within a specific local county during the post-war period. The hardships endured by the residents of Iași County in the initial three years following the war, encompassing famine, economic turmoil, and illnesses, heightened the calls for land distribution within rural communities. Administrative officials grappled with finding a middle ground between the requirements of the urban population, grappling with food scarcity and rampant speculation, and those of the peasants who clamored for a prompt resolution to the land matter.

The legal framework of expropriation and land distribution necessitated the establishment of specialized judicial bodies, consisting of committees and commissions for each county, which were inundated by the sheer volume of complaints from the peasantry. The absence of legal alternatives impelled numerous villagers to resort to either violent or non-violent acts of extrajudicial

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protest, signifying a shift in the dynamic between peasants and authorities, where land ownership ceased to be a privilege bestowed by the state or landowners, but rather a right acquired through military service. The government's commitment to redistributing land played a pivotal role in substantiating the villagers' demands. The postponement of plot sales was interpreted by the peasantry as a blatant renegeing on the promises made during the War. Essentially, acts of extrajudicial protest were instigated by both the administrative and legal mechanisms of agrarian reform, and by shifts in the villagers' perception of authorities. Conflicts that arose between peasants and landowners mirrored alterations in power structures within rural communities, and the ascent of new leaders whose authority was validated by the War. The prominent landowners found themselves ensnared in a struggle for both land and influence that proved insurmountable, yet they endeavored to subvert the reform process through any available means.