



# Peasants under Siege: The Collectivization of Romanian Agriculture, 1949-1962

*Gail Kligman, Katherine Verdery*

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In 1949, Romania's fledgling communist regime unleashed a radical and brutal campaign to collectivize agriculture in this largely agrarian country, following the Soviet model. *Peasants under Siege* provides the first comprehensive look at the far-reaching social engineering process that ensued. Gail Kligman and Katherine Verdery examine how collectivization assaulted the very foundations of rural life, transforming village communities that were organized around kinship and status hierarchies into segments of large bureaucratic organizations, forged by the language of "class warfare" yet saturated with vindictive personal struggles.

Collectivization not only overturned property relations, the authors argue, but was crucial in creating the Party-state that emerged, its mechanisms of rule, and the "new persons" that were its subjects. The book explores how ill-prepared cadres, themselves unconvinced of collectivization's promises, implemented technologies and pedagogies imported from the Soviet Union through actions that contributed to the excessive use of force, which Party leaders were often unable to control. In addition, the authors show how local responses to the Party's initiatives compelled the regime to modify its plans and negotiate outcomes.

Drawing on archival documents, oral histories, and ethnographic data, *Peasants under Siege* sheds new light on collectivization in the Soviet era and on the complex tensions underlying and constraining political authority.

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