

**Babeş Bolyai University**  
**Faculty of Economics and Business Administration Cluj-Napoca**  
**Doctoral School in Economics and Business Administration**

# **PhD THESIS**

**- ABSTRACT -**

## **The social and economic thinking of professor Nicolae Ghiulea**

**PhD Supervisor,**  
**Professor Mária Magdolna VINCZE, PhD**

**PhD Student,**  
**Stanca Alexandra POP**

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Nicolae Ghiulea, University of Cluj, University Extension, cooperation, socialism, International Cooperative Alliance, peasant state, social policy

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*„Sooner or later, the whole world will find, of course,  
happiness in returning to nature.”*

**Nicolae Ghiulea, 1925**

## Introduction

In recent years, countries have shown a growing interest in the social economy, from the need for a more balanced economic system, transferring its centre of gravity from making a profit on the integral development of society. Confirming this idea, Nobel laureate for economics in 2009, Joseph Stiglitz, said: „We have focused too long on a particular business model, i.e. one that maximizes profit”. The last years’ crisis has shown us, however, that this model has failed and requires alternatives.

A viable solution is the cooperative, component of the social economy. During the nearly two centuries of existence, it has aroused the interest of many thinkers from around the world, including the Romanian Professor Nicolae Ghiulea. From 1844 until today, cooperatives offered us a beautiful history, often confronted with obstacles, but always aiming towards high moral and social ideals.

Some link the cooperative to socialism, others consider it an instrument of communism. Leaving aside the erroneous tendencies that the cooperative enterprise has acquired in some parts of the world, cooperatism was always intended to offer a „third way” between capitalism and socialism, a reconciliation of the rich and the poor, the achievement of social justice in a free and democratic society.

One thing is certain: the cooperative is a historical reality that arose from a necessity. Although not appreciated at its true value, the size of the cooperative movement is still impressive today. Globally, it is owned by nearly 1 billion individuals, which means that approximately 1 billion people have chosen to be part of a cooperative in order to obtain housing, food, a job, a gain to ensure, in other words, to develop.

Nicolae Ghiulea was one of the most important Romanian theorists of cooperation, devoting a substantial part of his work to the idea of association. His concerns in the cooperative domain were harmoniously combined with the social policy proposals designed to pave the way to a better, more just world. His approach belongs to the beginning of the twentieth century, corresponding to the period in which he lived and helps us shape the cooperative movement, particularly the Romanian one.

Nicolae Ghiulea remained in history as a prominent figure in the economic and sociological Romanian community of the interwar period, being one of the leading economists of

the time and an outstanding personality of the peasant thinking current.

## **Research methodology**

This paper brings to the attention of all a subject that has not been addressed but sporadically in the economic and sociological literature. The research activity in the chosen domain aims to bring to light the personality of Professor Nicolae Ghiulea, his place among the great theorists of the Romanian economic thought, the validity and the actuality of his conceptions.

In an effort to achieve our predecessor economist's monography we used all available means to perform a detailed study on the life, activity and work of Ghiulea, re-editing his economic and social writings.

The paper is based on the research of archives, books and specialized periodicals belonging to the interwar period and mainly uses qualitative methods of scientific analysis (hypothesis, abstraction, induction, deduction, analysis, synthesis, comparison, analogy, historical method).

The thesis is divided into three chapters, corresponding to the fundamental areas investigated, namely: the personality of Nicolae Ghiulea, his notion of cooperation and the social policy proposals contained in his work. **Chapter 1** presents who was Nicolae Ghiulea, restoring his life, activity and work. Here we also offer valuable information about the establishment of the University of Cluj, meticulously collected from the county and national archives. The professor's special inclination towards the cooperative and our desire to update a neglected topic led us to allocate a larger space to **Chapter 2**. The theoretical and practical approach to global cooperation is complemented by the specific Romanian cooperatism, integrated to the universal one. In **Chapter 3** we made a division on various issues of the social policy measures which Ghiulea considered appropriate for interwar Romania. Final considerations bear the imprint of the author and bring into actuality topics addressed in the thesis.

## Chapter 1

### **Nicolae Ghiulea – important figure of the interwar period**

Nicolae Ghiulea was born on September 11, 1884, in Iași. With a background in Mathematics, he approached sociology due to some special studies he performed in Paris, Berlin and Göttingen, becoming a member of the German Society for Insurance Science in Berlin. Thus he dedicated to social policy, helping to impose this discipline as a subject in the Romanian higher education and to develop the Romanian issue in the field. His inclination to the study of the science on society determined him to join the Sociology and Ethics Seminar within the Faculty of Letters and Philosophy of the Iași University, led by Dimitrie Gusti. Here he stood out with a work entitled *Mathematics and mechanics in social sciences*, a critical exposé of the most representative authors' theories on social mechanics, the first synthesis of this type of Romanian and international social science literature.

Nicolae Ghiulea is one of the intellectuals of the Old Kingdom who contributed, immediately after the Great Union, to the establishment and development of the Romanian higher education in Transylvania, being present in the professorial corps of the Cluj University since its first year of operation until his retirement (October 1, 1919 - September 1, 1941). He was, successively, an associate professor, titular professor, vice-dean and dean of the Faculty of Law in Cluj. Here, and within the Academy of High Commercial and Industrial Studies in Cluj, he taught social policy, public accounting, industrial and financial legislation, finance and statistics. The Department of Social Policy, whose titular he was, was the first of this kind in the Romanian university education.

Due to his competence and authority in the socio-economic field, Professor Ghiulea was recruited in various administrative functions: Actuary at the Central House of Crafts, Credit and Worker insurance; general director of the Central House of Social Insurance; honorary technical advisor with the rank of state secretary of the Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare of the Directing Council of Transylvania; general secretary of the Ministry of Labour; president of the Budget Commission and general reporter to the state budget.

Nicolae Ghiulea was equally involved in the activity of some prestigious scientific research institutions, which he joined. He was a titular member within the Section of Social and Economic Sciences of the Academy of Sciences of Romania, was part of the „Association for the

social study and reform”, was a member of the Romanian Social Institute and the Institute of Social Sciences of Romania, member of Royal Institute of Administrative Sciences in Romania and member of the Institute for Worker Studies and Education in Bucharest. He was involved in the socio-economic section of „Astra” (whose president he was for a period of time) and founded (along with Ion Clopoșel): „The Institute of Studies Society of tomorrow” (1925) and „The social and economic movement – the association of publishers with permanent interest to social and economic problems” (1926).

Ghiulea held free courses at the Popular University in Cluj, in order to popularize science and enlighten the masses and was a lecturer of the University Extension. This was an association founded in Cluj in 1924 by a group of academics and was a cultural, non-political movement, aiming to spread among the masses, academic ideas, presented in an accessible form. In its 16 years of existence, the University Extension developed a rich activity and a cultural and scientific propaganda, totaling 1598 conference organized in over 50 cities in Transylvania and Banat.

His professional and social activity was publicly recognized and rewarded with a deputy (of Cluj) mandate in the Romanian Parliament, as well as with some important distinctions.

His views reveal a clear rallying to the peasant doctrine. A statement in a magazine from 1928 reveals his membership to the National Peasant Party. Nicolae Ghiulea was one of the strongest proponents of agriculture as the main branch of the Romanian economy. He thus distinguished by his role in solving the agrarian problem in the first half of the twentieth century.

Genuine promoter of the cooperative ideas and fervent fighter for their spreading and application in the Romanian national economy, Ghiulea was, along with Virgil Madgearu, Gromoslav Mladenatz and Ion Mihalache, one of the ideologists and propagandists of the Romanian cooperation. Also, he was one of the initiators of the social market economy in Romania.

He left behind a rich publishing activity with studies on cooperation, accounting, statistics, insurance, economic and social policy. In his works, Ghiulea discusses issues that were points of real interest in interwar Romania, contributing to the development and popularization of the national-peasant ideology.

A quantification of his work is as follows: over 280 articles in more than 30 publications in Romania („Cooperative action”, „Romanian administration”, „Archive for social science and reform”, „Economic, social and cultural cooperation”, „Social justice”, „Economic

independence”, „Review of sociology and labour studies”, „Journal of Labour, Health and Social Welfare”, „Financial Tribune”, „Cooperative life” etc.) and abroad („Revue des études cooperatives”, „Revue d'histoire economique et sociale”, „Revue internationale du travail” etc.), 17 volumes totaling over 1.900 pages and 200 other publications that include lectures, notes, reviews, comments, inaugural lectures, speeches, summaries etc.

His theoretical sociology concerns arise from the many articles that include considerations on notions of certain sociological interest. In his studies, Nicolae Ghiulea paid great attention to the notion of association, on which he built his whole cooperative conception. He was also concerned with: the changes through which a society is going, either evolutionary or revolutionary and their consequences; defining a national ideal; educating people to achieve a high degree of culture and civilization; democratizing social and political life; balancing the social structure of the society by strengthening the middle class; the critical situation of public officials. In order to address these issues, the professor often encouraged the intervention of the state, through firm social policy measures.

## Chapter 2

### **The economic doctrine of cooperation in Nicolae Ghiulea's thought**

In the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the liberal doctrine and capitalism had divided the society into two classes: the owners and the proletariat, simultaneously causing the manifestation of overproduction crises.

Among the first critics of the classical school there was **Simonde de Sismondi** (1773-1842), then the utopian socialists, who aimed social ownership, working in common and the equitable distribution of income – **Saint-Simon** (1760-1825), **Robert Owen** (1771-1858) and **Charles Fourier** (1772-1837) – and, last but not least, **Pierre Joseph Proudhon** (1809-1865), an opponent of utopias, but who resorted, unwittingly, to building a utopia, namely the Exchange Bank, an unintentional anticipation of credit cooperatives.

Professor Ghiulea sought the roots of cooperation in the works of the two associationist philosophers, Charles Fourier (France) and Robert Owen (England). Contemporaneous, the two cooperative promoters believed that the association was the ultimate solution to the social problem related to the injustice in the distribution of goods. Fourier imagined the production cooperatives in the form of the economic and social associations named „*phalanxes*”, while Owen developed a system of consumer cooperatives called „*communities*”. Because the associations they organized proved to be utopian, Ghiulea admitted that the founding fathers of the modern cooperative are, in fact, the Rochdale Pioneers. Their story began in the 1840s England, when the large industry was going through a period of great prosperity. Workers were replaced with machines and so they lost their jobs, became poor and miserable. In Rochdale, following an unsuccessful strike, 28 old weavers chose the path of association, gathering money for a year and installing their own shop. They established the principle of the double distribution of the benefit, founding the consumer cooperative.

If England gave the world the consumer cooperative model, France offers a rich history of the production cooperative. In France, the industry remained behind the British one, there were still no enormous factories with thousands of workers, so those who needed help were the craftsmen. To prevent the development of large capitalist enterprises, craftsmen were encouraged to join in cooperative production systems.

Through its economic side, the concept of cooperation won Hermann Schulze and through its Christian side, it captivated Friderich Wilhelm Raiffeisen. These two Germans founded the

famous cooperative models: the urban cooperative (the Schulze-Delitzsch system) and the rural cooperative (the Raiffeisen system).

Born from the social reality of the 19th century, the cooperative is based on several fundamental ideas, which since their statement in 1844 until today, have not undergone substantial changes. According to Ghiulea vision, they refer to:

1. *Association* – as a combatant of competition which determined the workers' misery and moral degradation, caused industrial crises and wars between nations.

2. *Mutual solidarity* – i.e. the principle of mutual aid, which essentially consists of the voluntary sacrifice of the individual for the good of the community.

3. *Primacy of the economic principle in society* – given that the economic relations have always dominated other social relations in society, and the economic regime was the one who determined the conditions of the social life.

4. *Uselessness and harmfulness of the trade intermediary* – who speculates and makes the goods more expensive.

5. *Equity in trade* – necessary because the competition between intermediaries leads them to perform unfair practices in trade (false advertising, theft, forgery, speculation).

6. *Eliminating the capitalist* – in the conditions under which the capital became anonymous, and the directors turned into simple proletarians.

7. *Subordination of production to the interests of consumption* – avoiding overproduction that causes economic crises.

8. *Creating the collective ownership* – with great social benefits, because not only does it not exclude or destroy personal property, but it even strengthens it.

9. *Democracy* – the cooperative is an association of persons, where everyone has equal rights to participate in the management and leadership of the enterprise.

10. *Social transformation* – i.e. the transformation of the socio-economic regime, dictated by the flaws of capitalism.

In addition, according to the principle of equity, in a cooperative, both categories are entitled to a share of benefits. In production cooperatives, consumers earn in proportion to the purchases they make, and producers in proportion to their work. On the other hand, in trade unions, i.e. in the cooperative banks, members can be both borrowers and lenders. Some of the benefits are shared among borrowers, by reducing the interest in proportion to the loan made by

each. Another part of the benefits is shared between all its members, according to the amount of capital each deposited. Finally, in consumer cooperatives, the benefits are divided according to the consumption of each member, in proportion to the difference between the sales price paid by each and the cost of the goods.

A cooperative does not differentiate between old members and new members, as it does not differentiate between the rich and the poor. The cooperative gives everyone the right to vote and to be elected. Each member has one vote, regardless of their social share. Moreover, anyone can enter and exit the association whenever they please.

Professor Ghiulea defined a cooperative as „an economic association with unlimited capital; the free and conscious association of a number of people, who aim to fulfil common goals through joint economic action and under the principles of mutuality, social and economic justice, and democracy” (Ghiulea, 1927: 61). Today, the definition of a cooperative adopted by International Cooperative Alliance is very much similar: „an autonomous association of persons united voluntarily to meet their common economic, social, and cultural needs and aspirations through a jointly-owned and democratically-controlled enterprise” (ICA: 1995).

Cooperatives fulfil an active economic purpose, which can be: of production, exchange, or consumption. The economic association for production evolved over time, from the instinctive one (family) to coercive forms (slavery in antiquity, serfdom in middle ages and later corporatism), to the free and contractual association (employment contract in the capitalist regime), to cooperation – the free, independent, conscious association. Following the same pattern, the economic association for exchange evolved from its primitive form of object lending, to the exchange of objects in nature, and then to the exchange of items with coins. At the beginning we had the usurer, and with the development of capitalism credit titles, credit companies and banks arose. The last form of the credit association was the credit cooperative. Lastly, the economic association for consumption was initially known as shared households, then as treasurerships, philanthropic institutions of consumption and ultimately as consumer cooperatives.

Considering it a superior instrument of social policy, Nicolae Ghiulea saw in cooperation, in its perfect form, the most elaborated means of social policy for achieving social transformation, with the ultimate goal of replacing the capitalist system with another that was in the interest of labour.

Cooperative seeks the economic emancipation and the moral, social and cultural raising of the lower classes. Although it opposes capitalism, it lives and develops in this regime. It lives in a system of free competition, and, although it offers its services under the same conditions as the capitalist enterprises, returns the surpluses to its members. Wanting to be a market regulator and a fighter for introducing the fair price in trade, cooperation always prices lower than the market. The collective capital in a cooperative commonly belongs to all its members, but can never be divided between them. Even in case of dissolution, it is entirely appropriated for social purposes.

A parallel drawn between the scientific socialism built by Marx and Engels and modern cooperative with its principles established by the Rochdale Equitable Pioneers revealed to the professor a high degree of similarity between the two apparently divergent systems. Synthesized, the comparison is as follows:

**Table 1. Marxist Socialism versus Modern Cooperative**

	<b>SOCIALISM</b>	<b>COOPERATIVE</b>
<b>Similarities</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• arised from human social needs</li> <li>• common precursors</li> <li>• identic purpose and social ideal               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- replace capitalism</li> <li>- create new societies</li> </ul> </li> <li>• face resistance from the capitalist regime</li> <li>• mutual completion</li> <li>• popular doctrines</li> <li>• designed and developed by the working class</li> <li>• based on democracy</li> <li>• primacy of labour over capital</li> </ul>	
<b>Differences</b>	socio-political doctrine	socio-economic doctrine
	introduces the socialist republic	establish the cooperative republic
	revolutionary	evolutionary
	transforms the society by law	transforms the society by substitution
	destructive	constructive
	based on class struggle	based on class solidarity
	abolition of profit	abolition of intermediary's benefit
	abolition of the private property	strengthening of the private property

*Source: Author's processing, data: N. Ghiulea, Socialismul marxist și cooperația modernă, București, 1946*

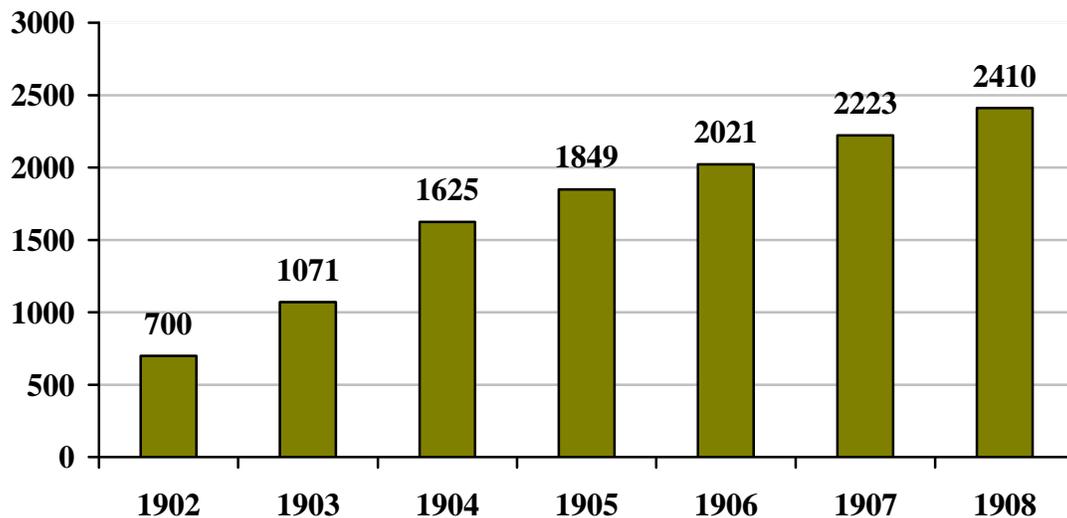
Although cooperative does not mean socialism, it can be considered a valuable form of socialization, believed Nicolae Ghiulea. It turns capitalist enterprises, where the capital leads and the worker is exploited, into companies in which work is leading and the capital is employed.

In Romania, the cooperative was born in villages. Agrarian reforms had made the transition to small property, in which the peasants worked the plot received with their own arms,

but with primitive techniques. The need for consumptive and productive credit attracted the agricultural population into the nets of usurers, who charged interests up to 500% for lending. In order to ensure their daily life and meet production requirements as small farmers, peasants understood that the solution lied in cooperation, in self-help. It did not take long until, under the initiative of village scholars – priests and teachers, the foundation of popular banks began, which came to cover the credit needs of farmers and remove usurers. The first popular bank was established in Buzău, in 1891, while in Transylvania the first Romanian cooperative was „The Society for Deposit and Loan”, founded in Rășinari, in 1868, by a teacher named Visarion Roman.

The brilliant elevation of the rural credit cooperative demanded the need for a unified leadership. In this sense, there had been created in 1903, „The Central House of popular banks”, institution funded and managed by the state. Due to the support of the new institution, in 7 years, the number of credit unions in Romania multiplied more than 3 times:

**Graph 1. Evolution of the popular banks during 1902-1908**



*Source:* Author's processing, data: I. N. Angelescu, *Cooperația și socialismul în Europa*, 1913

The middle of the fourth decade of the 20<sup>th</sup> century recorded in Romania over 7.300, whose members formed about 20% of the country's population.

The credit cooperative has been the foundation of the entire Romanian cooperative movement. We then have the example of the communities for leasing land, the results of which put Romania at the forefront of European countries. Born from the farmers' desire to remove the tenant, they expanded at an astonishing rate:

**Table 2. Evolution of leasing communities during 1903-1909**

<b>Year</b>	<b>Number of associations</b>	<b>Surface of leased land</b>	<b>Annual rent</b>
1903	8	4.940	94.785,69
1904	19	10.557	256.025,49
1905	37	30.358	626.144,08
1906	68	54.681	1.611.428,34
1907	103	73.344	2.183.822,78
1908	172	133.227	3.628.067,02
1909	275	190.521	5.574.531,26

Source: I. N. Angelescu, *Cooperația și socialismul în Europa*, 1913, p. 308

The success of leasing communities determined Ghiulea to propose the establishment of the merging communities in order to solve the problem of excessive division of agricultural land. Land appropriation operations that have been conducted over the years, the numerous purchases and inheritances, led to an endless fragmentation of Romania's agricultural land properties, which thus became administratively irrational and economically inefficient. The solution was the organization of merging agricultural properties through communities with setting the minimum indivisible lot of 5 hectares.

For the peasants, the economic benefits of merging were huge: acquisition of modern means to achieve a rational culture, managing land in order to achieve savings in production and even organize farm culture, obtaining credits with low interest and on long term.

The public authority, considered Ghiulea, was obliged to facilitate the establishment of these associations, to provide specialists, measuring instruments and credit facilities, also ensuring the legal framework of the entire merging operation and the protection against fragmentation of small agricultural properties.

The problems faced by the peasantry aimed, because of its numerical preponderance, the whole nation. It was estimated that in the interwar period the capitalist state was in a deep crisis, assuming that it would be substituted by a national-peasant state. The professor came up with a detailed and justified plan to organize the Romanian state, adapted to the needs imposed by the circumstances prevailing at that time.

His desire relied on concrete facts: in the mid-nineteenth century, the main economic branch of Romania was agriculture, providing 70%-80% of exports. In addition, in the proportion of 83%, the population lived in rural areas and over 73% of the active population was working in agriculture. Ghiulea's proposals came just to confirm an obvious necessity, a way forward worthy

of consideration in the development of the Romanian state.

The peasant state was going to be a constitutional monarchy, with a widely decentralized political, economic and social organization and a central organization reduced to the services required to perform the elementary functions of the state.

The state organization plan prepared by Nicolae Ghiulea rallied the principles of the Romanian people, being characterized by simplicity, prudence, logic and order. For Ghiulea, the optimal state formula comprised seven ministries: Finance, National Defense, National Culture, Internal Affairs, Foreign Affairs, Justice and National and Social Economy, all under the guidance of the Council of Ministers.

For a state organization focused on the peasantry, it was firstly necessary to fight for the economic, cultural and political development of this class. The appropriate form for a small agricultural economy was, certainly, the cooperative. The cooperative regime was the only one able to replace the bourgeois capitalism in decline. Professor's conclusion was that the best form of government for the cooperative regime was the peasant, national, solidarist and democratic state.

Although organizing the peasant state was supported through the National Peasant Party, Ghiulea drew attention to the fact that this issue should not be treated as a class claim or one of any party, but a frank recognition of the social reality and the great national issues. From an economic point of view, the peasant state had to rely on cooperative organization of family households and the acceptance of state intervention for the establishment of the economic equilibrium.

## Chapter 3

### **Nicolae Ghiulea's contribution to the development of the Romanian social policy**

Nicolae Ghiulea was not just a pure theorist; he was not a passive observer of the economic and especially social states characterizing the Romanian people in the times of hardships of the interwar period. His active spirit, his inclination towards teaching and propaganda, his love for culture and civilization and his relentless desire to witness the progress of the Romanian society always led him to provide practical solutions to any issue that aimed the nation.

Observing the misery in which the Romanian peasantry was living, the continuously degrading situation of the craftsmen, whose occupation was threatened with extinction, the youth deprived of proper training to ensure their own progress and that of their nation, the damaging of the academic professors' living standards, the lack of state support for guiding labour, the lack of an insurance service organization, the seizure of the Romanian industry by foreign arms, Nicolae Ghiulea, imbued with a deep sense of social justice, reacted in the advantage of the majority, on behalf of the whole nation. Encouraging, in addition to self help, the use of state intervention, the professor can be counted as one of the initiators of the social market economy in Romania.

The social policy measures proposed by Professor Nicolae Ghiulea in the interwar period essentially aimed social justice, social peace and social development. Their goal was not the enthronement of a new social system, but correcting the existing one, its improvement and adaptation to the requirements of all classes of the Romanian people.

Aiming at solving social issues that are specific to a certain regime and a certain period of time, the social policy requires a precise adaptation to the social and economic circumstances of each country. In the interwar period, the international social policy was dictated mostly by the developed, industrial countries and primarily addressed the working class. Because our country was formed in its majority of peasants (14 million peasants to 500 thousand industrial workers), Ghiulea's attention was righteously directed mainly towards this social category.

First, the need to organize agricultural insurance in the interwar period was imperative. Natural disasters were destroying the farmer's property, demoralizing him and pushing him towards the heavier, but more reliable, city life. The helplessness in front of disasters discouraged

the peasant, who waived his business development, leading to the inevitable decline of agriculture and, with it, the collapse of the Romanian economy.

Agricultural risks could be insured through commercial companies, mutuality, professional agricultural associations, or through state-owned companies. When private initiative was insufficient, there was need for intervention of the state, which, through an appropriate social policy, needed to restore the balance of social solidarity. In all cases, the state was required to support the private organization of agricultural insurance, by providing administrative, fiscal or legal benefits.

Commercial companies were just starting out and had poor performance (together they guaranteed with less than 2% of the total agricultural heritage of Romania), while mutuality was facing illiteracy and lack of initiative from the rural population. Accordingly, Nicolae Ghiulea admitted state involvement by organizing insurance through mandatory mutuality.

Another proposal of social policy concerned completing the Romanian compulsory education. Ghiulea accused Romania of an early adoption of democracy, made before people had reached the appropriate level of culture. The fault lied in the hands of state leadership, who had not prepared especially the lower classes to embrace properly the benefits of a democratic life: universal suffrage, decentralization, land reform.

Education was not supposed to be restricted to a few schools available to a privileged elite, but made widely accessible to all, for an even spread of the culture. The professor considered a full circle the one from 7 to 18 years, for the young up to the age of military service not to lose contact with school. In order to complete education, social needs therefore dictated the extension of primary school with three years of secondary school and then four years of specialized studies for apprentices and workers.

The middle class was not given less importance in the social policy program created and supported by Ghiulea. He noted that middle class Romanians were a minority in the cities of our country after the First World War and that there was a need for them to conquer and maintain the small industry, which they represented.

The incentive program for trades considered some essential points: guiding the peasants remained landless after the rural reform and especially their children towards crafts, organizing vocational education, legal regulation of apprenticeship, state aid for the establishment of workshops, administrating public works to craftsmen, cheaper transport, creating and supporting

craftsmen cooperatives, exemption from customs duties etc.

In the same context, that of the middle class, Nicolae Ghiulea recommended placement service organization. Early 1900's Romania was deficient in terms of workforce, because, as Ghiulea stated: the owner did not know where he could find the workers he needed and the worker where he could find employment.

Analyzing the different types of placement offices, Ghiulea opted for public offices, explaining that placement, for social peace and for normal and equitable regulation of the labour market, should be neither in the hands of employers nor in those of the workers; it should be a public office, under the direction and control of both the working class and of the employers. In his view, the placement should be: organized and open to the public, specialized, fair, impartial, paritary, free, optional, commercially managed, centralized and, lastly, a public institution.

Nicolae Ghiulea was collaterally devoted to some other aspects of the social life that needed assistance. In an attempt to create a just society, the Romanian economist supported: introducing the Sunday rest, for moral, social, economic, cultural, physiological and religious considerations; imposing legal obligation for family aid; social assistance for war invalids.

## Conclusions

The theoretical edifice of cooperation was built gradually over a long period of time in which a number of thinkers have wanted to see the enthronement of a system meant to achieve social justice. In parallel with the theoretical efforts, the idea of cooperation was put into practice in different corners of the world.

The cooperative has also been the focus of many Romanian scientists, economists, sociologists and politicians of the interwar period. Virgil Madgaru, Ion Răducanu, A. G. Galan, T. C. Ionescu-Pășcani, Ion Mihalache, I. G. Duca are just a few of them. The history of economic thought is harmoniously complemented by the work of Professor Nicolae Ghiulea, whose social and economic thinking, and particularly his cooperative conception, we have set out in this paper.

The injustice that capitalism caused among the masses bred two social movements: cooperation and socialism. Even if, at first, the cooperative movement tended to be confused with the socialist one – both based on association – they eventually took different paths, because socialism wanted to conquer the political power and organize the socialist state, while the cooperative sought equity and social harmony through the organization of the economy, without abolishing capitalism, or at least without introducing the cooperative order by revolutionary means.

As Nicolae Ghiulea stated, the cooperative is the economic system suitable for the underprivileged classes, but, we add, not just for them. Cooperation is open to anyone who wants to join forces with their fellows for a brighter future. According to the statistics presented, the cooperative movement is not only characteristic for less developed countries; industrialized countries have as well strong cooperative structures, working in various fields.

Depending on the attitude towards the capitalist system, representatives of the twentieth century cooperatives were divided into: those who saw cooperatives as part of the capitalist order and those who wanted to remove capitalism. Professor Nicolae Ghiulea stood in the second camp. While acknowledging the development of cooperation under capitalism, he aspired to achieve the integral cooperative and, with it, the enthronement of a new economic and social system based on cooperation.

Cooperative as a new and unique or predominant social-economic system is, we believe, a utopian idea. As proof, she never managed to establish a new order. The realistic ideas about the

importance of cooperation especially in villages entwined, in the views of its followers, with these utopian visions regarding its ability to ensure social peace and even the institution of a new social system. It turned out, however, that it can coexist with any viable system, as long as it is not diverted from its own principles.

Same as two other major Romanian theorists of cooperation (Victor Jinga and Gromoslav Mladenatz), Nicolae Ghiulea equated cooperation with the organization of the peasant state. Cooperatives, as means of removing the exploitation and of transforming the society, were developing in the capitalist state; but our ideologists fought so much that the changes that the cooperative relations would bring replaced the capitalist economic system with the cooperative and establish the most appropriate organization form, the peasant state. This desire was based on actual facts: in the early twentieth century, the Romanian economy was dominated by agriculture, both in material production and in the demographic structure. In 1938, over 75% of the population continued to be employed in agriculture. Ghiulea's proposals came just to confirm an obvious necessity, a way forward worthy of consideration in the development of the Romanian state. The idea of the peasant state, of the peasant democracy, although apparently very close to the realities of interwar Romania, proved to be illusory .

Cooperation emerged in Romania before the country reached a level of development that would provide favourable operating conditions. Despite this, the cooperative survived and captured the interest of many, due to the Romanians' native spirit of collaboration and their strong sense of sociability.

Along with the communist dictatorship, disregarding the role and characteristics of cooperatives, their basic principle – freedom of association – was violated. There existed associations that functioned as cooperatives, but they were created by order of the state and forced all citizens to join. „Looting” the peasants by creating the collective property degraded the idea of cooperation. It is therefore understandable why in Romania the public confidence in the cooperative enterprise is currently very low.

In the new economic context, many of the current governments pay great attention to the cooperative option, whether for stimulating agricultural productivity or reorganization of the national social protection system. Recognizing the contribution of cooperatives in managing recovery in their countries, they encourage their citizens to turn to the cooperative model of enterprise, in terms of funding, increasing productivity and overall welfare.

Although his vision was often idealistic Cannonball would be unfair to say that the measures he proposed were unrealistic. On the contrary, they totally fit the circumstances of interwar Romania. Concept developed by it was shared by many prominent economists of the time. The reality was the same in the eyes of all: a poor peasants and villages in misery cities demographically dominated by a foreign population, the decline of craftsmanship, an inadequate education, inefficient organization of the state apparatus, an irrational distribution of labor between sectors of the economy, lack of a social policy directed mainly to support sensitive priority segments (ie the peasantry, the middle class).

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Naturally, some of the Romanian professor's ideas are outdated, having become perishable over time. We can not talk about completing compulsory education, which was already performed, or about the need to organize labour placement. Surprisingly or not, though, many of the topics addressed by Nicolae Ghiulea are today priority issues for the Romanian state.

We shall conclude, therefore, by exposing the actuality of Professor Nicolae Ghiulea's conceptions, anchoring the measures proposed by him in the early twentieth century in the reality of today.

First of all, we refer to the **adoption of the cooperative model of enterprise**. As shown, the cooperative has recaptured the attention of many countries, which realized, especially in the context of the recent crisis, that the cooperative enterprise can be an opportune rescue. The reasons for which cooperatives can ensure success, both economically and socially, are diverse: they contribute to poverty eradication and economic and social cohesion between different regions of the state; provide economic, social and cultural development at local, national and international level; supply goods and services accessible to the population; achieve work integration of local population and people from disadvantaged groups and work reintegration

through continuous education and training of their members; generate new jobs with promoting equality of opportunity; combine job safety with entrepreneurial flexibility, giving each member authority and promoting local democracy through members' participation in decision-making; support members to remain independent and give them a sense of contributing to the society's and their own wellbeing; ensure the economic welfare of their members and develop courage in action and motivation of workers in order to reduce absenteeism and increase the quality of goods and services offered; increase trust between members etc. Last but not least, this dual business model aims to obtain the cooperative ideals of solidarity, economic efficiency, equality and peace.

**The association of small farmers** is still today a concern on the Romanian agricultural scene and beyond. By pooling resources and work of small farmers, the activities become more profitable and new opportunities for economic development are open by attracting local, zonal or regional benefits. Using the collective power increases the prosperity of the members, their families and the communities they belong to and facilitates bank loans procurement. Moreover, it creates the possibility of signing agricultural insurances (statistics show that agricultural insurance's penetration rate much is higher among associations, companies and farmers that exploit larger areas) and of benefiting from public subsidies to insurance. The Romanian state, for example, supports, since 2010, legal persons by subsidizing 50%-70% of the agricultural insurance premium, depending on the risks covered.

**Merging agricultural properties** with achieving agricultural cadastre and the promulgation of a special law to create viable, market-oriented farms (through offering a premium for leasing the exploitation, supporting notary services, cadastre services and land registration costs and guaranteeing loans contracted for land purchase) is one of the priority concerns of the Romanian authorities today. It seeks the formation of a middle class in rural areas, the transition from a subsistence agriculture to an entrepreneurial one and the possibility of applying advanced technologies (for example, the development of irrigation systems and reducing excessive dependence of Romanian agriculture on weather). Merging agricultural properties also aims to: increase productivity in agriculture; achieve profitable economic ties with retail chains and the manufacturing industry and maximize the agricultural output; increase the degree of association and cooperation; multiply taxed labor and the degree of taxation in income from agriculture; attract foreign investors.

In Romania it is still necessary to **develop the agricultural insurance sector**, given that the agricultural insurance market in Romania is one of the poorest in Central and Eastern Europe, and that domestic agriculture is four times less covered by policies than the European average. In 2012, insurance covered only 20% to 25% of the cultivated area in Romania. This underdevelopment of the field is due, on the one hand, to farmers' lack of information and, on the other hand, to the insufficient involvement of the state in subsidizing farming. Moreover, there are risks such as drought, frost and winter floods that insurance companies do not cover. Therefore, there is a need to take some action in this area, because agricultural insurance plays a significant role in stimulating investment in agriculture and in stabilizing farmers' income.

Equally important and current is **the correlation of theoretical education with practice**, for the application and capitalization of the knowledge acquired, its strengthening and deepening and for broadening the knowledge horizon. In this way, we develop the ability to use the knowledge acquired, to apply it in various situations and forms. In addition, the interdependence of theory and practice in Romanian education determines: the specialization of the young in a specific occupation; the formation of personality, the moral development, the preparation for life, work and performance of different social roles; the facilitation of entering the labour market and adapting at work; the increase in motivation for learning that supports the efforts to study by understanding the utility of theoretical knowledge.

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