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The propaganda of the totalitarian government: Hitler-Ceausescu

*Radu STATE**

22nd of December 1989: Ceausescu was removed and together with him was buried the totalitarian government whose foundation was settled by him after 1965, the year when he came on power.

To understand better the meanings which this regime has obtained in Romania we thought about a parallel analyze between the fascist regime of Hitler and that communist of Ceausescu, writing down the main aspects which make them similar, and different.

What does this totalitarian government mean? For Raymond Aron the totalitarianism has 5 main elements:¹

1. The totalitarian phenomenon appears in a regime, which confers to a single party all the monopoly of the political activities. While in Germany the N.S.D.A.P. eliminates, one by one, through different means the other parties, the social-democrats and the communists, in Romania the Romanian Communist Party will remove from the political stage of the country, after the 1946's elections, the National Peasant's Party and the National Liberal Party.
2. A monopolistic party is animated and equipped with an ideology which confers an absolute authority and which becomes the official truth of the state. The ideology of a nazist party is that one, which is written down by Hitler in his work, called "Mein Kampf" an ideology, which became national after that Hitler came on power. The ideology of the Romanian Communist Party had on its basis the Marxism and Ceausescu will impose it as the single valid theory.
3. For the diffuse of this official truth of the state he reserves for himself a double monopoly: the monopoly of means of the forces, and the monopoly of the means of convictions. The esembles of the communication means- radio, press, TV, are controlled, lead by the state and by that who represents it. In Germany the Gestapo was directly subordinated to the Fuhrer, representing his interest and working with such a brutality and vigilance which tried to validate the security in Romania.

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4. The majority of the economic and professional activities are totalized totaled to the state and became real parts of the it. How the state is inseparable from its ideology, the official truth.

Germany's economy in Hitler's time had firm orientation towards the war economy, as a result of the aggressive policy carried by that country. In Romania the way towards industrialization after the Marxism's fundamental truth was adopted by Romanian Communist Party like a fundamental line of the economic policy of the state.

5. From now the state's activities are subordinated to ideology, a great mistake committed in an economic activity, which became simultaneously an ideological mistake.

We can conclude that from the entire of the elements of totalitarianism its main weapon is the spreading of the ideas and the mental submission of the masses of the people called the propaganda system.

In "Sociologia della comunicazione" Aranguren J.L. saw the communication of a totalitarian system like a communication in a single direction: from the governors to the governed considering that "monopolization of the communication's channels permits the easy manipulation of public opinion".

For him the political communication implies a specific language:

a. **semantic extralingvistic elements:**

- the communist greeting (with the fist up)
- the fascist greeting (like the ancient Romans)

b. **rituals and laicized liturgies**

c. **musical elements**

- patriotic marches and militaries

d. **semantic elements**

- national hymns, revolutionary and fascists.²

The propaganda – understood like an action unfolded systematically and with perseverance for being very popular using the most varied means, sure informations, socio-political ideas and doctrines, and like a kind of interpretation of the social events from the point of view of sure ideology, opinions and social behavior of private persons or collectivites-represents one of the dominating phenomenon of the 20th century.³

It is urgently necessary that in the propaganda study of the two states, that of Hitler's and Ceausescu's we must take into consideration 3 levels of analyses:

1. Which are those to whom is addressed;
2. Which are the ideas that it contains;
3. On what channels and through what methods is inoculated by the state.

For the first problem a possible answer could be the next: the propaganda has to situate itself on an adaptable level to be understood even by the most narrow – minded people to whom is addressed. As a conclusion, this level has to be in the same quantity low, as big the mass is. The receptivity of the vast masses of the people it is very limited and the brain power of understanding is reduced while the brain power of forgetting is immense, for that effectual propaganda has to limitate itself in a few points and to propagate it under the form of order words.⁴ This is the answer given by Goebbels, the propaganda minister of the 3-rd Reich.

That is how the German state understood his propaganda system, something, alike with that of Ceausescu's, whose long-neverending speeches were addressed to the vast masses of people. The spirituality, the intellectual force had not to rise upon a medium level.

The nazist propaganda was centered on 2 important directions:

- propaganda inside of the country which was primordial and through which Hitler succeed to wake up in his people the national feelings pushed even to chauvinism, in the sense of a political approval of his aggressiveness.

- propaganda outside of the country through diplomacy to indulge Europe.

Both directions had their own mission to conclude to immunity of people in front of propaganda unfolded by the forces from the antihitleristic Coalition.⁵

In Romania, the inside propaganda of Ceausescu was destined to hide the truth about the dictatorship.

About the vehiculated ideas of such a system must be remarked the existence of some forte-ideas pillar-ideas, on which is supported the whole ideology.

In a first phase, before the war had broken out, the main ideas of the fascist ideological system were the superiority of the German race, the theory of the vital space, and the fight against Bolshevism. Once with the break out of the war, these ideas get a new significance through a new strategic concept of Hitler that he called Blitzkrieg; he was convinced that the German people and soldiers could force and decide the war's destiny.⁶

That was the situation in Romania, too, where the fanatic Ceausescu imposed his thesis about the superiority of the socialist system, which can reach his maximum-highest level of development in the communist system. The prolific literature writer with his ideological character overcame to elaborate the concept of a multi-developed socialist society, which designated the stages of develepmnt of socialism to be reached by Romania in the last decade. The main principles of this society included in "The program of Romania Communist Party the creator of a multi-

developed socialist society and the Romania's promotion towards communism" are the next:

- the role of Romanian Communist Party as a vital center of the whole society;
- the dialectic and historic materialism-the single valid conception about life and world;
- the socialist propriety - the unique form of propriety;
- the systematization of the territory, having as a result the demolishing of thousands of villages all over Romania;
- the democratic centralism;
- the planning of the economy on the base of a unique national plan of development;
- self leading, self administration, self financing of the economic units;
- a new agricultural revolution implying an agriculture of an intensive type;
- a judicious distribution of production power over the whole country;
- the combining of education and research with the practice in production;
- the forming of a new man multi-laterally developed;
- the adoption of an atheistic conception, the religion being considerate after Marx's theory "opium for people".⁷ In connection with this last point, I should like to mention the demolition of many old churches, architectural and historical monuments: the church of Saint Spiridon, of Saint Friday, the Vacaresti and Cotroceni, being from the XVIIIth century, and not forgetting about those newly built towns without churches. For example Victoria town has 20.000 inhabitants and they have no church.

Observing the 2 systems we can mention the similitude of ways and methods through which is diffused to the vast masses of the people.

The propaganda manner of the nazis party was very multiple, were not effectual only the public meetings, speeches advertisements, articles and books, demonstrations, slogans, uniforms, but were used violent conflicts, scandals, administrative "corrections" to the left side opposers with the help of S.A. teams. All these events were related in newspapers and they contributed to the popularization of the party, and offered it a glory of militancy and virility.⁸

The man who combined the peaceful methods with the violent ones with a perfect ability was J.P. Goebbels who from 1926, after being named Gauleiter at Berlin, put all his talent in the nazism's service. His first measure was the creation of a new press - called "Storm" - a very provocative paper in which he improved the nazist technique of propaganda, using the parody method against anti-communism, and anti-Semitism, adding to all of these the traditional method of nazism - the scandals. He

was able to create through these scandals very advantageous situations to his party, that in 1926 after the armed conflict between S.A. and the communists, planned diabolically by him, the numbers of N.S.D.A.P. members grew with some thousands.⁹

He himself made of Hitler a Messia of German people,¹⁰ who exposed his theory: the propaganda permitted us to conquer and to keep the power and gave us the possibility to conquer the World.¹¹

But the most efficient method used by the nazist party was the physical elimination of the opposer and as a testimony are the concentration camps.

The propaganda tehnic meantime has developed and the European context is quite different although the similarities are evident, the methods used in Romania have a new aspect.

The proclamation of independence what was registered in 1964, the way out under the effective patronage of the Sovjiet Union, it was a skilful propagandistic act destined to win the world's sympathy, from Occident for a very long time, and in the virtue of this act, the Occidental politicians had seen in him, more than a decade, a character with wide democratic views.

To say the truth, between 1965-1975 it has been as certain an opening of Romania, of the Romanian spiritual values towards Europe. In this first stage of Ceausescu's propaganda, when he succeed to attract the people's sympathy, the force methods liberty to express itself, only in 1975 the Romania Television entered directly under the government's sub-order. The meetings, demonstrations, visits in factories had the mass adhesion that believed sincerely in the good intentions of Ceausescu.

Followed his popularity beyond the great political personalities of the World are a lot of visits in capitalist countries and the meetings with presidents like: Jimmy Carter, Queen of England, Valéry Giscard D'Estaigne, etc.

In the second stage the ceausist propaganda must be put in connection with the world-wide crisis of petroleum in 1979, simultaneous with the promotion of his family members in leading functions matter with implications upon the political and economical situation in Romania. The elaborated thesis on the XIth, XIIth Congress (1979, 1984) became real dogmas, the fundament of the Romanian communist ideology imbued to people through by all means. They are discussed through the press, TV, which accord to it bigger spaces, they are introduced in elementary schools, middle school, high schools, universities, through politico-ideological lessons.

As a difference between the previous period, the meetings and demonstrations are realized with the help of mass-media brought forced at the place of the meeting. It is the beginning of the of the appearance of

opposition – the miners strike in Jiu-Valley in 1979, and even of the party members – ex.: is Constantin Pirvulescu at the XIth Congress – antagonistic against dogmatism and Ceausescu's attempt of a dictatorship.

As a result of the opposition will be the intensification of the oppressive organs, in specially of the security, concrete forms are the imprisonments and the disident's inquiries. That is the time when the security is transforming more and more from a protecting organ of the state in a protecting organ of Ceausescu and his politics.

The culminating point of the propaganda in Ceausescu's time, is represented in the last 5 years of his leader ship, marked by the deepening phenomenon of the world-wide crisis what can be felled in Romania.

The main method used by the propaganda from now, will be the repetition of his ideas in all newspapers, TV, books, a weapon what will return against him, boring in the middle of people a real sentiment of disgust and rejection. This politics wanted to show that it is what does not exist and against it the people couldn't take an attitude. And this situation was because of a security with a fearful face, with a network of listening and an ultramodern information, endowed with the last successes in techniques and they were able to eliminate any physical person who tried to express a disapproval against Ceausescu's politics.

It is the time when the cult of personality touches the highest point of paroxysm and when the people refuse more and more the Ceausescu ideas. The reactions of protest are multiplied when the untruths become the real truths, and people is hating more and more the Word communism. No one propaganda can convince the people about the good-kind action of communist system.

We don't wish, instead of conclusions, only to underline the different mentalities which characterize the two nations Romanian and German, provided from the different concrete situations historically different in which were manifested the 2 totalitarian regime.

We can speak about a fanatized German people till the end who idolized his leadership from the prism of a long absolutist tradition but by a Romanian people convenient for Ceausescu in his first years, hostile to his dictatorial politics, on the bases of a parlamental life in the past.

But the propaganda in totalitarian regime's time is similar, just like the disastrous situation what is created in such kind of regimes.

Such a study is very complex and it is necessary a lot of attention to put in evidences all the concludent aspects, but future researches will confer a larger and more generous frame work.

Notes:

1. Poliskov Léon, *Le totalitarisme du XX-e siecle*, Paris, 1987, p. 7;
2. Aranguren J.L., *Sociologia della comunicazione*, Milano, 1967, p. 264;
3. Popescu-Puturi Ion, *La propagande pendant le II-eme guerre mondiale*, Bucuresti, 1980, p. 175;
4. Poliakov Léon, *Op. cit.*, p. 213;
5. Popescu-Puturi Ion, *Op. cit.*, p. 176;
6. *Ibidem*, p. 177;
7. x x x , *Programul PCR de faurire a societatii socialiste multilateral dezvoltate si inaintarea României spre comunism*, Bucuresti, 1971;
8. Poliakov Léon, *Op. cit.*, p. 213;
9. *Ibidem*, p. 229;
10. *Ibidem*, p. 226;
11. Popescu-Puturi Ion, *Op. cit.*, p. 176.