Doctoral thesis summary

Mechanisms of Nazi propaganda in Banat. 1933 - 1945

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Mechanisms of Nazi propaganda in Banat. 1933 - 1945

Keywords: totalitarianism, political propaganda, National-Socialism, Banat, German minority, eugenics, espionage

This thesis attempts to investigate the mechanisms and impact of Nazi propaganda in interwar Banat. Given the circumstances that the Banat region has a multicultural and multiethnic profile and the German minority in whole Romania was a distinct target of Nazi propaganda, it becomes necessary and scientifically relevant to approach this subject in an equidistant and methodic manner.

The conceptual and theoretical connections that can be made to other research fields guarantee the interdisciplinary character of this approach. From cultural, socio-political and economic perspective this intended analysis has the potential to highlight relevant concepts and dynamics within multicultural societies, such as the Banat region. The cultural and socio-political levels are strongly interconnected mostly because of the conditionalities between cultural and religious identities and political behavior or the structure of political organizations. The economic factors also shaped the development of intercultural relations, especially in Banat, knowing the fact that in many cases the cultural construction of identities was based significantly on concepts like richness and poverty. Consequently the tendency for political activism and political representation depended on economic conditions.

The documentation for this project began in October 2009 right after my admission to the doctorate program at the Institute for History “Gerorge Baritiu” belonging to the Romanian Academy in Cluj-Napoca. Under the supervision of Dr. Lucian Nastasă I started my research and in the coming period I managed to finish some studies (partially published) on subjects such as: nationalism and totalitarian regimes, political representa-
tion of minorities, press and the ascension of nationalist movements, discursive strategies of the Extreme Right in interwar Romania, eugenics as ideologized science etc. The documentations sources consisted primarily in:

- The local archives and personal collections: e.g. the press museum in Jimbolia
- The archives of County Libraries in all the major cities of the Banat region.
- The National Archive and the C.N.S.A.S archive in București
- National and international libraries

The above-mentioned documentary sources needed to be supplemented and diversified in order to fulfill the requirements for such a complex project. In this respect an extended research at the level of German archives that contain supplementary and more concrete material on this topic, represented a major condition for finalizing this laborious study. After receiving a research scholarship issued by the D.A.A.D (German Academic Exchange Service), I proceeded documenting my thesis in three major German research facilities (Munich, Regensburg and at the end of my documentation phase, Berlin) mainly because of the following considerations:

1. there are major academic institutions: Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität München, Technische Universität München und Kunstakademie München. In the interwar period this institutions had many Romanian students which studied and possibly were exposed to national-socialist influences

2. there is a dedicated institution for central and eastern European history and culture: Institut für deutsche Kultur und Geschichte Sudosteuropas which can provide suplimentary material for my project

3. the documentation periode in Germany was intended to also include other facilities and institution which can provide material for this project. In this respect an important documentation source were the Bundesarchiv Berlin Lichterfelde and das Politische Archiv des Auswärtigen Amtes.
This thesis addresses the following important aspects:

1. Investigating the mechanisms of Nazi-propaganda in the Third Reich and its impact/manifestations/particularities in interwar Banat
2. Highlighting the societal predispositions for nationalism (National-Socialism) in interwar Romania
3. Analyzing the internal structure and the dynamic of Nazi-like organizations in Romania and especially in Banat
4. Investigating the conditions of emerging Nazi orientations inside the German communities in Romania
5. Identifying key figures/persons which promoted elements of National-Socialism
6. Analyzing the Nazi-propaganda methods in interwar Romania: press, institutions and organizations, public figures etc
7. Analyzing the discursive construction of National-Socialism in interwar Romania and the role of ideologized science (eugenics) in this process

The most important part in the documentation process for this thesis presupposed an extensive investigation of archive materials. Although relevant from historiographic perspective the subject of interwar german propaganda in the romanian space and especially in the Banat region was scientifically neglectet. The literature dedicated to this subject after the World War II was significantly based on incomplete or partially ideologized assumptions. The Romanian historiography during the communist era approached the interwar national-socialist episode primarily at ideological level\(^1\) without seriously analyzing the structural social, political and economic systemic conditions of that time.

Most Romanian and German written works\(^2\) on the subject of Nazi influence in Banat are scientifically not accurate enough for ensuring a neutral and impartial presentation of the historical facts. Furthermore, such works are methodologically reductionist and far from reaching their potential as comprehensive and rigorous documented analytical undertakings. On the other hand recent works on the subject of Nazi influence in Romania despite their accurate character, examine the concrete manifestation of Nazism in Banat only partially and chronological intermittent\(^3\).

The necessity of documenting an extensive and comprehensive political history of interwar Banat is based exactly on the untargeted character of the previous works dedicated to the general theme of Nazism in Romania. Therefore, the most important objective of this thesis was to expand the analytical vectors by taking into consideration primarily, structural features (political, economic, socio-cultural), that are directly connected to the Banat region. The variety of archive materials available after finalizing the documentation process, both German and Romanian origins, provided a large amount of new relevant information. All these information had to be interpreted and correlated to the political and ethno-cultural profile of Banat. The entire thesis was structured into thematic parts (most of them corresponding to distinct chapters) in order to ensure an extensive and comprehensive approach to different investigation fields (such as politics, culture, ethno-cultural dimension, international relations, ideology and science).

The first part of the thesis is dedicated to a broader delimitation and definition of concepts, theories and research methods used for analyzing the subject of propaganda and totalitarian regimes. Having this conceptual framework as a starting point, I was able to plan the next steps of the analysis. The following section is allocated to a comprehensive description of Nazi-ideology manifestation in the Banat region. Most importantly, I tried


to highlight the institutional development of Nazi-like organizations in the Romanian society by taking into account both systemic and sub-systemic social, political, cultural or economic factors. In this respect special attention is dedicated to the emergence and development of the German Ethnic Group in Romania (the so-called DVfR-Deutsche Volksgruppe in Rumänien).

Furthermore, the next part of this thesis emphasizes the key-role played by the German espionage structures in Romania, especially in the regions having a significant German minority. In this context, my analysis focuses on the propaganda mechanisms managed at the level of Third Reich’s high authorities such as the Ministry for Foreign Affairs.

The final part of this thesis investigates the complex and simultaneously controversial relation between ideology and science in the case of National Socialism. Claiming a scientific character becomes a key feature in the discursive construction of Nazi propaganda. Therefore, ideologically confiscated scientific elements (such as the eugenics) become means for empowering and legitimating the German totalitarian propaganda. Demonstrating that hypothesis in the Romanian interwar context represents the major objective in the final part of this work.