

Abstract

This habilitation thesis includes the scientific results published after defending my PhD title (in February 2005), accomplishments linked to the main topic of the thesis, as well as an academic development plan for the future. Based on these achievements and plans I submit my application to obtain a certificate as PhD advisor in the field of History, with a special focus on Romanian contemporary history, communist cultural policies, educational and ecclesiastical issues of the post-war period.

Immediately after defending the doctoral thesis in November 2004 we conducted in-depth research on the relationship between religious policy and the communist cultural politics. More specifically, we analyzed the most significant correlations between the Soviet type atheism and the cultural/educational policies implemented after 1945 by the leadership of Romanian Communist Party/Romanian Workers' Party. This research direction materialized in 2005 when we completed a first academic study delivered at the Institute of History „Nicolae Iorga“ and titled *Romanian Workers' Party (RWP) Policy on Culture and Religions between 1948-1953*.

My research was favored by the significant opening of archives regarding Romanian contemporary history. After 2006-2007 important historical documents became accessible to researchers (at the National Archives and National Council for the Studying of Securitate Archives/CNSAS). First of all, I tried to reconstruct the institutional history of the ideological departments of the RWP's Central Committee, focusing on the origins, functioning and assignments of the Propaganda and Agitation Department, an ideological body led by Leonte Răutu between 1948 and 1965. Through his propaganda apparatus, through his ideological lieutenants, Răutu has supervised the process of cultural Sovietization, the unmasking campaigns, the appointments in the newly created Romanian Academy etc.

In order to complete such type of institutional history approach we outlined (in collaboration with Vladimir Tismăneanu) the political biography of the aforementioned L. Răutu. In 2008 came out at Humanitas publishing house the volume *Perfectul acrobat. Leonte Răutu, măștile răului* (The Perfect Acrobat: Leonte Răutu, the masks of evil) at a

time when the writing of biographical essays in Romanian historiography was neglected. In the second part of the book we attached additional historical documents.

Another achievement was the volume which came out in 2010, entitled *Literature and the Arts in Communist Romania, 1948-1953* (Humanitas, 2010, 335 p.). The objective of this book was to review the cultural policies developed by the new communist regime in the era of high Stalinism, when the terror exerted on the Romanian society and culture was unprecedented. Approximately ten studies and consistent articles (some based on academic papers) announced the book.

We also addressed conceptual issues related to terms such as *proletkultism*, *Zhdanovism*, *socialist realism*. Based on the study of the secondary literature, we elaborated and sometimes nuanced some assertions made by various authors (historians, literary historians, sociologists).

In 2005, when I began to focus on the subject of cultural policies, it seemed to me unrealistic to approach the entire Gheorghiu-Dej rule (1948-1965). I considered that the global approach of the cultural policies would have been too ambitious; I believed that the final result - given the access to historical sources at that time - would have had the appearance of a work too indebted to open sources. The archival revolution changed this perception and allowed me later to try a monographic approach of the cultural policies of the first two decades of communist regime.

Such monograph was the volume published at the end of 2011 – *Politicile culturale comuniste în timpul regimului Gheorghiu-Dej* (The Communist cultural policies during the Gheorghiu-Dej regime, Humanitas, 2011, 341 p.). This new book aimed to capture the evolution of cultural policies developed by the RWP leadership from the early 1950s to 1965 (from the Stalinist/Zhdanovite stage to the limited liberalization phase) and the role played by the propaganda apparatus in consolidating the ideological line at the level of cultural creative unions and other artistic institutions. We have attempted to analyze the process of imposing cultural policy from a comparative perspective, with reference to developments in the USSR and the Communist countries of Eastern Europe.

In this volume, one also analyzed the role of less-studied institutions (the Stalin Party Raion as a cultural-ideological actor) and discussed an essential concept (*Cultural Revolution*). The historiographical importance of this 2011 book was confirmed by an

important distinction gained two years later; in December 2013, the Romanian Academy awarded me the "Nicolae Bălcescu" Prize (2011) for the above-mentioned monograph.

Until 2011 I approached very few aspects of the cultural policies under the N. Ceausescu regime (1965-1989). For the period after 1965 the problem of periodization has been raised perhaps more acute than in the case of the Gheorghiu-Dej rule. My 2014 book entitled *Intellectual and Artistic Life in the First Decade of the Ceausescu regime, 1965-1974* (Humanitas, 2014) is also an answer to these dilemmas regarding periodization. Initially – like other historians – I preferred to analyze the 1965-1971 period. This period seemed to have a certain unity being circumscribed to the so-called "liberalization". Finally, we opted for another periodization; we chose as the last point of reference 1974 moment. The year 1971 had been challenged for several reasons. First of all, the impact of the Ceausescu's "Theses of July 1971" turned out to be somewhat later (at least in some cultural fields); on the other hand, a bit earlier (even at the 1969 RCP congress in 1969, sometimes even in 1968) some of the "theses" were actually stated, but not with the virulence of July 1971. This periodization of mine had also a conventional, didactic purpose, but also a rational core: 1974 is the moment when Ceausescu was proclaimed president of the republic (his cult of personality will experience an unprecedented exacerbation, and many intellectuals were forced to validate his power); 1974 marks the withdrawal of Prime Minister Ion Gh. Maurer, perceived as an important actor of "liberalization"; Finally, the 1974 RCP program and the law on mass media are other important landmarks announcing increased censorship.

Using archival documents issued by the ideological authorities, we aimed at emphasizing the dynamics of the cultural field in the first decade of the Ceausescu regime, especially in relation to ideological political power strategies. These strategies aimed both the liberalization within literary-artistic and scientific fields, accompanied by an attempt to co-opt the old intellectual elite – marginalized and persecuted in the first two decades after the war – and the instrumentalization of the national values for the benefit of the political elite.

I have also tried to focus on the way intellectuals have dealt with Ceausescu regime without neglecting their accommodation process starting from the apparent abandonment of socialist realism to the proclamation of Ceausescu as president, as well

as the role played by the ideological sections of the Central Committee in imposing the official ideological line.

In the last part of the thesis I focused on describing my academic skills and teaching abilities which I acquired since 2005. Between 1998 and 1999, I taught History courses at pre-university level. In the years 2008, 2012 and 2013, I delivered lectures in front of students and history teachers at the Sighet Summer School organized by the Civic Academy Foundation. The themes of these courses focused on specific areas of Romanian post-war history such as: coming to terms with the communist past; the methods of transitional justice; communist cultural policies.

I also held lectures at the Summer University in Râmnicu Sărat, organized by the Institute for the Investigation of Communist Crimes and the Memory of Romanian Exile/IICCMER (August 2009 and August 2010). The themes of these courses were focusing on: the statute of the archives of Romanian communism and on the political and historiographical implications of the condemnation of the communist regime. In March 2013, I delivered a lecture entitled "From the Stalinist Political Thought to National Communism and National Stalinism" in front of the students of the Faculty of Political Sciences (SNSPA). In August 2015 I held a lecture titled "Communist Cultural Policies in Post-War Romania: From the International Dimension to the National Stalinism with Xenophobic tendencies" in front of the students at the Summer School of the Center for the Study of Jewish History.

Between 2012 and 2018 I was member of many doctoral commissions at the Institute of History "Nicolae Iorga" and the Doctoral School of the Faculty of Political Sciences, University of Bucharest. From 2014 I was a member of the examination boards for PhD students at the Institute of History "Nicolae Iorga" and the Faculty of Political Science and Faculty of History (University of Bucharest).

Therefore, I consider that both the complexity of the scientific topics approached by me and the ability to disseminate the results of the academic research are key elements that can help the activity of the Doctoral School of Romanian Academy.

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