

Universitatea Babeș-Bolyai

Teza de abilitare

*După revoluția arhivistică. Noi surse și metode în
cercetarea comunismului din Centrul și Estul
Europei*

- Rezumat în limba engleză / English Abstract -

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English Abstract

The habilitation thesis entitled *After archival revolution. New sources and methods in the research of communism in Central and Eastern Europe* is structured, according to the instructions provided in the official procedure, in three sections. Its objectives are related to the new scientific environment in which the communist past is discussed in the academic field and the way in which new historical sources contribute to a more balanced evaluation of this past. In this context, the dissertation try to provide also an overview of the author's scientific and professional achievements, and its intended career perspectives in relation with his research and teaching agenda.

Even though during this period there was constant pressures on the personal agenda, the teaching portfolio become diversified and deepened. It has been and remains a large, busy and difficult to manage portfolio. Alongside the classic undergraduate courses in History (World History of the 20th Century, Political-Diplomatic Semantics and Comparative Post-War Political Regimes - 2005-2023), I have added those at Master's level, dedicated to transitions in Central-Eastern Europe in the 20th century (2007-2023) and Social Policies in Communist Romania (2008-2023). In addition, due to the needs of the Department, I have offered and offer since 2012, general and optional courses at the International Relations and Security Studies majors (Security Policies after the Cold War and Espionage and Counter-espionage in the 20th century). Also, as an expression of the interdisciplinary teaching agenda, I have taught special and optional courses for both the Faculty of Political, Administrative and Communication Sciences (Introduction to Modern World History-2006-2019 and Modern Conflicts, from 2019, at the undergraduate level and Civilization, Conflict and Cooperation in XXth Century at the Master of Conflict Management, 2006-2023) and the Faculty of Sociology and Social Work (Transitions and Social Policies courses 2009-2016).As a visiting professor at the University of Bucharest, from 2015 until now, I teach the

course Internal Structure of the Communist Party at the Master's Degree in History of Communism. Last but not least, many undergraduate courses are coupled with obligations related to the Long Distance Learning format at the Faculty of History (in 3 programs). Since 2007 I have been co-opted in the editorial board of the journal *Studia, Historia* series, published under the aegis of the Faculty of History. I have coordinated five thematic issues, in English, dedicated to various aspects of the history of communism in Romania (nr.1-2, 2007, nr. 2, 2011, nr.2, 2015, 1/2020, 1/2022). From 2014 I have become the coordinator of the History, Memory, Orality in the 20th Century Master Program.

From an academic administration perspective, since 2012 I have been elected by my colleagues in the Faculty of History and Philosophy, as a member of the UBB Senate. As a member of the Strategy Commission and of the Legal Commission (since 2016) I have participated in the drafting of the University Charters and the main university codes and regulations.

The wide range of subjects taught and assumed in the teaching portfolio, besides the difficulties inherent in such an endeavour, has generated a wide openness to the newest interpretations of contemporary history, as well as to recent models of analysis in the social sciences and history. This experience was enriched by my participation in different international research projects participated between 2007 and 2010, I was selected and participated as a member of the Romanian research team in the programme *Remembering Communism* coordinated by Professor Maria Todorova and Professor Stefan Troebst. I have participated in other several projects dedicated to political violence and related population movements (deportation, displacement, emigration) throughout the 20th century (Rethinking Violence in Communist Dictatorships in East Central Europe, 2009 or Making Europeans: Transnational Violences and European Heritages, Barcelona, 2018). On the other side, in 2006 I was asked to participate as

an expert (on electoral issues and repression) in the elaboration of the Final Analysis Report on the Communist Dictatorship in Romania. Subsequently, in 2007, I became a member of the Consultative Commission for the Analysis of the Communist Dictatorship in Romania. Also in 2006 I was nominated and became a member of the National Council for the Study of the Securitate Archives. From July 2007 until March 2018 I was elected and became the vice-president of this autonomous administrative authority that also manages through memory policies the files created by the former Securitate.

These professional changes also led to a reconfiguration of the professional agenda towards the study of the history of Romanian communism, initially from the perspective of repressive institutional policies. Research activities had been financially supported through projects awarded in national and international competitions. In this direction, I applied and won as coordinator, two research projects: CNCSIS, 2007-2009 - a project dedicated to the penitentiary system in communist Romania; and, another one - 2009-2010- under the aegis of the *EU, Education, Audiovisual and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA)*, dedicated to the way in which Romanian citizens were surveilled by the Securitate in 1970s and 1980s. The research results of these projects include a movie, but also books, articles and chapters published in prestigious publishing houses.

Developed on these directions, my professional and research activities become more and more embedded with the new ways of doing history. A new wave of historians, many of them specialized in XXth Century, propose a different way of analyzing the past of East Central Europe, a region in which the comparative perspective was linked to the study of common post-imperial frameworks. Thus, more and more historical comparisons take into account the influences and transfers of old and new models, emphasizing processes of reciprocal perceptions, mutual influences, and entanglements

among historical actors. This is the way in which I also try to analyze the three transitions that took place in the region in the last century. I look to the development of new institutions and organizations – not only to constitutions, but also to constitutionalization – and I observed the way in which their model was transferred and experienced in different countries (for example the administrative reform of Yugoslavia was exported in Poland and Romania in the interwar period). As I expose in the dissertation the institutions and organizations must be seen in their evolution, in their social and cultural milieu, and not only in what a static image contain in order to identify similarities and distinctions through case studies.

On the other side, being professionally involved in the study of the postwar period, I also try to develop a comparative perspective on the evolution of the communist regime in Romania. It was not only an international history, but more and more an social one, one that discuss the evolutions from the past not only from above, but also from below. Not a history without politics, but one with a lot of politics, which take into account many evolutions from economy, society and culture.

From an institutional and organizational perspective over the evolution of the communist regime, I migrated to a more and more social perspective over it. The topics of my investigations, the rural world, the inter-ethnic relations, the elites in politics, society and culture, were good arenas for such social-political enterprises. The archival revolution that take place in East Central Europe in the last two decades, developed in paralel with the eruption of the so-called memory industry, offer a lot of energy to these new trends in the study of the recent past. Sources from Party and State structures, that were at the origin between totalitarian and revisionist camps in historiography, become more and more inter-related, compared and interpreted from un unique but complex perspective. This balanced picture in which the political nexus (ideology and political and state apparatus) co-

existed with different other camps and networks within society, is structured along the new evidences that erupted mainly from the Secret Services and Party archives.

I'll try to illustrate these trends with my own contributions in the field, both at the regional level, in the three waves of transition, taking in account not only their initial turning point (1919, 1945, 1989), but also the further developments, trying to explain the failure of these regimes taking into account their evolution from their extractive essence to the inclusive, modernizing tendencies.

On the other side, looking to the social dimension of the communist revolution, with its breakthrough substance (a destructive one in relation with the old society and a constructive, ideological one in his prospective vision of the new society and new world), I try to observe through the lenses of the Party officials (in their official, but also in their (auto)biographies) this process. Beside this top-down perspective, many of my articles and studies favours an orizontal, or even a below perspective of the events. As many historians of the period in the region, I also consult – extensively – the archives of the Party and of the former secret services. From there, from the grey actions that the activists with regimentals, I try to extract the reactions from the society, the attitudes against and toward the changes that take place in society. Resistance, opposition, but also accomodation and collaboration were present in different grades and shapes. A distinct perspective is offered in my dissertation to the way in which memory production was conditioned during communism by inquiries that were experienced before by many former anticommunist detainees.

Last part of the text try to illustrate the capacity of the author to conduct reserch teams, its experience and recognition in the national and international field.

In my concluding remarks, looking to achievements, but also to the envisioned career development, I argue in the favour of cultivating these research fields that are methodologically relational to the international state of the art.