

Manipulation in political propaganda. Comparative analysis between the Nazis and the Colombian political class

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Abstract

The analysis of the communication and propaganda strategies implemented by the hegemonic media in World War II, specifically in Germany on the basis of the ideologies of the German National Socialist Workers Party, allows us not only to see how these strategies have affected the course of social policies in Europe, but also the effect on political communication in Latin American countries like Colombia. The objective here is to make a comparative study between the exercises of mass manipulation in Nazism and those congruently implemented in Colombia during the election campaigns to the 2018 presidency (confrontation democratic of Iván Duque and Gustavo Petro) from the different political extremes of the left and right.

Keywords: Manipulation; Propaganda media; Nazism; Political communication; Polarization.

1. Introduction

The manipulation of information has been the preferred tool of political campaigns in the world. It was evident in the case of the German National Socialist Workers Party and its popularity, reciprocity and support within the German population, driven by the media: “[...] a support that led them to convince 37% of the electorate in July 1932” (Julian, 2000). The political class of Colombia consistently impregnates some of the effective practices of Nazism, helping them to acquire a fanatical political base that extends from the extreme right to the radical left.

In Nazism, propaganda had the monopoly and complete dominance of television, radio, press and cinema; in fact, the Nazis created a Ministry of Propaganda, which had among its functions to promote and encourage anti-Semitism in the form of discrimination and hostility towards Jews. This indirectly generated the consent of acts against humanity of the German population.

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The Nazi propaganda played an integral role in advancing the persecution and eventually the destruction of the Jews of Europe, as it incited hatred and fostered a climate of indifference towards their destiny. The Nazis were skilled propagandists who used sophisticated advertising techniques and the most modern technology of the time to disseminate their messages (Museum Memorial Holocaust United States).

Since 2018, the Democratic Center Party in Colombia has aimed to strengthen antisocialism, anti-terrorism and anti-unity as ideological engines of control through issues or problems that the majority of the population disapproves of, by means of the media manipulation strategy that pretends to know individuals better than they know themselves, as explained by Noam Chomsky (2011).

Hitler's socialist party mainly used radio to generate absolute and loyal approval for Nazism in the audience. The radio was used as a psychological injection that persuaded the people with hate speeches and nationalism in which political issues were treated with an emotional emphasis to impact the morals of the people. Due to the vulnerability of the listeners the party achieved mass support of irrational obedient National Socialism. In the words of Adolph Hitler: "We must reduce the intellectual level if the goal is to reach a greater mass" (Julian & López, 2000, p. 4). There are evident practices of the Colombian political class where social networks is the main hegemonic dissemination platform to indoctrinate and convince Colombians in electoral campaigns focused on increasing sentimentality, country pain, fear of communism and hatred of opponents with irrational speeches driven by the emotions of the listener.

In Colombia, the leader of the Democratic Center political party, Álvaro Uribe Vélez, is characterized by turning politics into a war that needs to exterminate those who oppose his positions by classifying them as enemies of the country. "Uribismo handles a simple, direct, current, popular and moralist political discourse" (Colombianadas, 2006). "[...] where the good guys support him, and the bad guys are disguised communists who intend to hand over the country to guerrillas and crime" (Fierro, 2014, p. 140). However, this warlike oratory is nothing more than a manipulative maneuver meant to construct a national problem so that Uribe himself can be the preacher who offers the solution to this invented or exaggerated crisis.

2. Findings

Eco (2012) indicates the need of nations, institutions and people to create adversaries in order to use them as a driving propaganda tool, which in turn allows for the one making demands to obtain the role of the savior or redeemer. This has been clear in the speeches and billboards of the Democratic Party with messages such as: "I vote for the one that Uribe says" or "Vote for Colombia not to become another Venezuela". These advertising billboards became propaganda massively reproduced by the followers of the Uribism ideology in the country.

The practices have gone from having a strategic dye to becoming a game of deception. They have changed from being a persuasive message requiring the use of rhetoric and the structuring of language, to becoming a dichotomous, belligerent discourse, full of feelings and not arguments (Escobar-Toro, 2018).

Using the fear of communism or of surrendering the country to terrorism or to criminals and murderers were some of the strategies used by the presidential candidate Iván Duque in 2018. These strategies were inspired by already existing fear among citizens and aimed at convincing them that Duque's opponents represented or defended those premises in its policies.

Iván Duque indirectly associated the model of the Venezuelan government with several proposals by Petro (the opposition candidate, red), who, according to him and his party, would establish productive ways to lead crisis to countries that at some point were considered socialist or holding socialist aspects and implement an anti-democratic and totalitarian political-social regime (Prada & Romero, 2019, p. 14).

Paradoxically in Nazi Germany, thanks to the economic crisis and the feeling of national shame following the Versailles treaty, people became convinced that the Jews were the responsible for all the evils of the nation, a strategy that served to turn the people in favor of Political ideology of the Nazis. This type of political tactics resembles one of the "10 Strategies of Manipulation" by the media postulated by Noam Chomsky (2011). These are based on generating distraction and bias in the recipients to manipulate them unconsciously and persuade them towards certain political ideologies. This tactic corresponds to the *Distraction Strategy* that directs the attention of the mass towards matters of minor importance, normally linked to issues that generate greater attraction to people. Then, while the public is occupied, radical changes necessary to sustain ideologies are implemented all the while behaviorism entwines the recipients. As Noam Chomsky argued: "Keep the attention of the distracted public, far away from the real social problems, captivated by unimportant issues. Keep the public busy, busy, without time to think; back to the farm like the other animals (Burgos, 2010).

Through cyber democracy in Colombia, Gustavo Petro used social networks as the main platform for disseminating his position through violent and derogatory attacks against his main political opponent: Iván Duque.

In this type of language one seeks to legitimize the <I> in political acts and actions and delegitimize the <Other> is from its acts and actions and, at the same time promote the polarization between the groups that support or oppose the leader (León-Guerra, Molero & Chirinos, 2011).

The tendency to make the public believe that there are only two alternatives to the electoral proposal, that is to say, that there are only two options of person (party or political ideology) has generated the radical campaigns that are locked in the closed concept of good and bad.

Both candidates took advantage of the existing polarization and forged demonizing speeches, mainly Petro, through which they sought to belittle their adversary and make him appear as unacceptable and morally inferior, criminalizing his views, radicalizing discourse and distracting society; all the while the issuer's ideas were justified by being considered right (Prada & Romero, 2019, p. 8).

3. Conclusions

According to what has been analyzed, politicians with different extreme ideologies in Colombia adopted strategies of persuasion, manipulation and social influence, fostering discourses of hate, patriotism, morality, ethics and sentimentality. These were also leading factors in the social policy of the German National Socialist Workers Party under the leadership of Adolf Hitler, which were analyzed to compare and conclude upon the similarities between the two subjects that were studied. While the timeline between the historical periods is broad, the line between the practices of political propaganda is very narrow.

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