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Romanian mayor criticized for dressing up as Nazi

By DAN MIHAESCU Associated Press Writer



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CONSTANTA, Romania (AP) -- An anti-Semitism monitoring organization in Romania has filed an official complaint with prosecutors against a mayor for taking part in a fashion show dressed as a Nazi officer and wearing a swastika.

Radu Mazare, the mayor of Constanta city, is no stranger to showmanship. He once appeared at a public event dressed as James Bond, and he has done fashion magazine spreads.

Mazare, a member of the opposition Social Democracy Party, also was charged last year, along with 36 other government officials, with carrying out illegal real estate deals that cost the country 114 million euros (\$143 million).

On Sunday evening, Mazare, 41, and his 15-year-old son performed on stage at the fashion show in Mamaia, a Black Sea resort town near Constanta, and both appeared to be dressed in Nazi uniforms.

Television news shows later showed footage of the performance in Romania, where it is illegal to display swastikas and where people convicted of doing that can be jailed for three years.

The newspaper Evenimentul Zilei quoted the mayor as saying he was inspired to dress the way he did by the film "Valkyrie," in which a German officer "tries to free Germany of a mad dictator." Actor Tom Cruise plays Col. Claus Graf Schenk von Stauffenberg, the aristocratic army officer who was among those executed after a failed attempt to assassinate Adolf Hitler in July 1944.

Mazare told TV station B1 that he thought he had covered up all the Nazi symbols on his uniform, but did not see a swastika on the belt because it was very small.

On Monday, the country's Center for Monitoring and Combating Anti-Semitism accused Mazare of wearing a Nazi uniform and displaying a swastika during the fashion show. The center urged Romania's chief prosecutor to investigate Mazare.

In Israel, the Simon Wiesenthal Center on Tuesday called on Mazare to resign and to apologize for parading in the Nazi uniform.

Efraim Zuroff, the center's director, "expressed a sense of insult and outrage at the poor judgment Mazare exhibited," especially since he was accompanied by his son. "It would hard to adequately describe the depth of the pain that your appearance caused, not only to Jews and other victims of Nazism, but to any person of moral integrity who knows the history of World War II," the center said in a statement.

Romania denied participating in the Holocaust until 2004, when it accepted the findings of an international commission that Romanian authorities killed up to 380,000 Jews during World War II in territories under their control.

The Associated Press called Mazare's office and the chief prosecutor's on Tuesday, but neither was available for an interview.

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