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**”RULER OR LEADER?” – A PSYCHOLOGICAL ANALYSIS
OF THE ROMANIAN LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT**

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Abstract:

Since 1990, Romania is doing substantial efforts to recover the gap of the management culture and leadership by importing new concepts and training programs for the management positions. The expected outcome of these training programs has been affected by the lack of the psychological informations of the romanian specific. As a concrete consequence, this data shortage has led to misunderstandings, lost resources or a fake belief that the training objectives have been reached. The cultural differences made the management roles and responsibilities to be understood and implemented in different ways. The present analysis is about the collective mental, rulers and leaders and how appropriate is to replicate the western manager model into the romanian management culture.

1. Introduction

Studies about the romanian leaders, focused on their psychological features and the local management culture, are very few, quite limited in practical observations and not linked to the history events.

The failures or the poor results obtained in the training programs of the romanian leaders are caused by the lack of the above mentioned informations and the misunderstanding of the local specific. In fact, the romanian leaders are trained and assessed with western standards of the management culture and they are expected to act and manage accordingly, which is the most common error of the foreign formers.

Not all the formers have a solid psychological university background, fewer have lived within romanian communities or have knowledge about the tumultuous local history that shaped our present. The reality confirms that the most part of the ultimate techniques of grown ups training programmes are not very effective for the natives of the cultures with thousands of years behind, because those people are the result of two milleniums of evolution, hystory, psychological and spiritual accumulations and they are directly influenced by their inside accumulations.

They simply are not reacting as they are expected to do.

The understanding of this development should be based on the collective mentally concept or the collective consciousness, which is really influencing the people, even over the centuries. In fact, the people remain basically unchanged, showing the same strenghtenings and weaknesses, creating a wide spread impression that ”nothing is changing”. We are the same, as we were hundreds of years ago. How could it be possible? Where is the evolution then? These are real questions and the analysis should provide solid answers for them.

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2. Image of the ruler

When a social or an etnopsychological study is undergone, the agreed conclusions lead to two main directions: the psychological profiles can be done to the people as well as to the individuals and each member of the community is the bearer of the major features of the group (positive and negative). From the cradle to the grave the traits remain, generally speaking, unchanged.

There are a lot of factors that influence the development of a people: genetical inheritance, developments of the historical events, economical development, education, geographical relief, climate, natural resources.

A longitudinal analysis of the romanian leaders is hard to be made, because one has to be taken into account a very large period of history. No human being can make this kind of research, therefore the most useful explorative instruments for our inovative approach are the hystorical records and the well known collective beliefs, opinions, myts and desires related to the rulers, all of them wrapped in a documented psychological interpretation.

”The RULER” is an archetype, an ancient image, that has been passed over the time until our present days. Despite the mythological age, it is very present in the organisational life like any other concepts or processes. The way how these informations are transmitted from one generation to another remains an undiscovered mystery. Some theories claim education and culturalisation as certain causes, but they are very far from covering the whole truth. Somehow, the informations containing all the romanian knowledge and experience based accumulations are imprinted in the human ADN and thus, it is ”delivered” to the offsprings. Whatever it would be the scientific truth, the outside effects of the internal beliefs are very real and measurable.

2.1 Western Leader versus local Ruler

The most common raised question is: ”RULER” or ”LEADER”? Do they have the same meaning? The present analysis will prove that they are different concepts, with distinct ways of manifestation.

In the western countries one meets the term LEADER, having the origin the verb ” to lead”. From the beginning, it should be stressed out that the western societies are collective ones. In this type of human organisation, the accent is put on the group, on the system itself and the internal processes between the members of the group. In this environment, creativity takes a second place, the planning, the organisation of the work, clear roles and responsabilites, effectiveness, motivation, take the central place. The man is a small piece in a very complex social and economical mechanism, with a defined place.

The philosophy from behind the stage is really simple: people are working for the system and the system is concerned of the wellbeing of the people. This matrix of thinking has given birth to the industrial revolution, the welfare state, and the organisational culture. We can state for sure that the western leader, after the kings and the emperors, was the manager itself, the future leader with vision.

In the roumanian culture, the image of the ruler is overlapping the symbol of the power. This image was profoundly influenced by the numerous invasions occured on these teritories. Located at the crossroads of the biggest empires of the world and being a gifted country in natural resources, Romania was a constant temptation for the conquerors. As the history recorded, over the ancient Dacia’s people first came the Roman Empire. Then, over the new born romanian people came the barbarians, and then the Ottoman Empire, the tatars, the greeks, the fanariote regime, the teutons knights, the Austro –Ungarian Empire, the russians and then the comunism with the famous comunist prisons and the Ceausescu’s dictatorship.

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Almost 2.000 years of striving for liberty and national unity.

The history confirms the fact that, the societies less affected by war or invasions have the appropriate time for a balanced and sustainable development. The organisational processes could not appear in a permanent on the run and an unsettled society. With very short periods of war and occupation, the west countries of the Europe had the chance of a promising environment for a constant development on solid basis.

In opposition, the same times did not let the romanians to construct or develop, for long periods they have been thrown into the arms of the poverty and the slavery. Always on the run, with couple things saved from the invaders, burning down their own houses and the grain fields, poisoning the fountains, romanians had to fight for their own survival and liberty, the biggest ideals of this so tormented nation. In these hostile circumstances, romanians strongly needed a powerful leader, brave, carrying firmly his sword, merciless with the enemies, an encouraging example for the troops, being the first one in launching the attack. This is romanian leader portrait that the romanians are ready to follow anytime.

From the ruler, the people is expecting severity, a harsh attitude, to be a doer guy especially with the traitors and enemies, who have been "populated" in large numbers these territories, in all the periods. At that time, the betrayal was punished by execution, a required and wellcomed measure by the mass of the people.

That kind of leader was a must, a condition for the survival of the entire nation. Romanian people will never accept, recognize and respect a ruler who is not sharing his piece of bread with the soldiers, who does not live in the trenches with his men and instead staying behind the lines, in a secure position. If the ruler is not ready and eager to die in action with his team, he will never be considered and accepted as a leader.

3. The corruption and the romanian leadership

Even today, the most shared opinion is that Romania strongly needs leaders like Steven the Great, Vlad Țepeș, Mircea cel Bătrân or Michael the Brave. The burning desire of having justice, fairness and leadership centred on the people agenda are fuelling these widespread beliefs and desires.

Punishing the corrupted people, bringing into Court the responsables for the breakdown of the economic facilities all over the country, are the requirements of a large mass of people and the cause of the latest street movements. The political class has been required a new approach, all these requirements were made having in mind the image of the voievodal rulers.

Because the romanians are not proactive but reactive, first it should happen something and then they will react on it, romanians do not consider that the change is starting with each of them. They are expecting the change and the good things to come from a providencial leader, without they having a personal contribution to the change. In their opinion, the corruption should be eradicated from top to down, like administrating an external cure or a magic medicine.

In Romania, due to the dimension of the phenomenon, corruption is a matter of national security and a major task for all the political and administrative leaders, no matter of the level of decision. Few knows, that this plague is very old. The Dacia's people did not know what bribe means, the corruption entered our territory brought by the roman empire administration. Later the fanariote systems have taught well the romanians the bad byzantine empires habits. At that time, the corruption has become a way of living.

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For centuries in a row, with few exceptions, the local rulers have been used bribe as the main tool for getting the throne from the Ottoman Empire and maintain the power. In order to pay the bribe and keep ruling, they started to oppress their own inhabitants.

Coming to the contemporan history, the comunism regime made from bribery a way of personal salvation, a possibility to have a better living standard for the families back home. Thus, this wrong practice has been unofficially encouraged. After 1990, due the gap of a real leadership and no experience in building a democratic country, the corruption phenomenon has really exploded and spreaded to all levels and professional fields. The opportunity of making big fortunes over night and the poor legislative system, have boosted this toxic phenomenon. As a paradox, romanians do not have something against the leaders who steal ”a little”, somehow that is considered to be an accepted behaviour, as long as they do something for the rest of the people.

Strong actions and long term committment are required from the actual political class. There were many ferm interventions from the internationals level, requiring Romania to stay on course of fighting against corruption. Corruption can destroy a country from inside.

So, the history confirms that bribe and the romanian leadership have been very much connected, sometimes they become as one, and that was blocking for centuries our nation development.

As the historical records are proving, the hard working, honest and brave romanian leader was an exception, the common rule was the traitor, corrupted and eager to accumulate fortune ruler, not concerned about the needs of his people. That is the reason why, after hundreds of years romanian people still wants that kind of rulers, like Steven the Great and Vlad Țepeș, famous for the way they have administrated the justice.



Fig.1 (Steven the Great and Vlad Țepeș painted portraits)

4. Expectations from the leaders of the local companies

In the local companies the situation is similar: tough managers are getting more respect from the employees, than the gentle or the very polite ones. As practice, the employees are putting their leaders to tests, to see how far they can push the limits. They will have this attitude until the leader is drawing a firm line of respect and hierarchy.

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Imaginary borders of authority have to be set by the leader. Since that moment, a respectful relationship starts to be built. This game of power has the origin in the wars carried in the past: ”Can I go with you at the war? Can you lead us to the victory? Can we trust your leadership?”. Testing the leaders is a common behaviour of the people fighting for their own survival. The side effects of the history are very present in our life, more than one can imagine.

Romanian people does want to be led by tough leaders, but not dictators. The ideal leaders of the romanian should combine the harshness with the understading of the personal needs of their people. ”I had to do something and my boss allowed me to leave earlier from the office”. In Romania, mostly, the respect is much more imposed than obtained. The employees who have a difficult boss, they are cursing him, they are talking badly about him, but, down deep in their hearts, they show respect and a bit admiration. Instead, soft leaders are seen more as colleagues than leaders.

Unffortunately, romanian leaders are vulnerable to become dictators or tempted to develop an autocratic management. As countermeasures to this possible antidemocratic attitude are the active presence of the political and social mechanisms like the parliament and the civil society. These preemptive mechanisms have the role to warn, to prevent or to stop such tendancies, when they show up.



Fig.2 (Former dictator Nicolae Ceaușescu and his wife - painted portrait)

5. The leadership and the virility

A special attention has to be provided to the connection between the romanian leadership and the virility (the manhood). The romanian leader is much more appreciated, if he reveals a human face to the public. Gestures like going out and having a beer, attending to the parties, smoking in the public places, cursing, having sexual adventures, they are helping him to grow his popularity and get the so much wanted public respect, from both of men and women.

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There is an other paradox at the romanian people: the personal vices turn out into personal qualities. Having a mistress will not lead to the repudation of the society, on the contrary.

The public campaignes of revealing the love affairs of a romanian leader will help him to become more accepted and admired. It is a service done to that a person and not a political hit. This turn of the events, somehow it is hard to be comprehended, it is very much related to the slavone influence which we have in our blood, as a nation. As it well known, the slavic people were pretty much attracted to do their leaving by singing, having parties, loving and have a drink. This part of life had a very important significance for them and it seems we have inherited it.

In the romanian companies or institutions, some managers still consider that the women employees are a sexual asset of the company, therefore the sexual harrasment rate is quite high and the sexual favours are very much rewarded with promotions and ammounts of money. Some of them, without proper management and leadership training, are considering themselves kings, reigning their own kingdom, therefore, they have the right of life and death on their slaves. Very hard to believe, but in private discussions, these kind of rulers really use the term slaves when they refer to their employees.

However, at the romanian people, virility means power and it is publicly perceived as the capacity of leading!

6. What the romanians do not take from their leaders

Romanians can be very tolerant with their leaders but, there are certain situations when they put a stop to this acceptance. It is not considered as being too wrong having an affair, drinking a glass of alcohol in the office or being late at the work when the employees are already fed up with the work. These bosses are easily understood and forgiven by their own employees. Even if they are behaving badly with the employees. They are found excuses for their misbehaviour. In the public perception, the management position is assimilated more with the benefits than the responsibilities, that is why a boss has extra rights.

What is not accepted is the situation of not paying the employees for the performed work, not respecting their working rights, especially when the manager can make the payments, but he is directing the financial resources to the acquisition of luxurious goods and pleasure activities for his own interest. Also, the theft, bankrupting the business, not keeping the promised word could produce a lot of resentments and public opposition. The origin of this behavior has deep roots into the history, when the romanians went through severe periods of shortages, misery and oppression.

In the same time, the romanian people does not accept that personal values like family, religious belief, folk customs to be attacked or affected somehow. When they were chased away from their own homes and territories, the only things they have left were these values.

Roumanians are hospitable, open to alliances, reliable and committed, but they do not negotiate their life style or beliefs with anybody. A leader who disregards or does not protect and preserve this psychological and social reality loses their respect and confidence and, finally, he will get out of the game, without any management position. Swimming against the stream is not a reccomandation in this particular situation.

As an observation, the romanian people can be the best ally you can have, under the condition of letting untouched their core identity. Again, the history is revealing a truth: a people cannot be otherwise than it is in the reality!

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7. Conclusion

The romanian people wants beloved and cursed leaders in the same time, well prepared professionally, but open to the personal needs of the people they lead. They should be ready to fight anytime it is required, but they should not be stiff and arrogant. Being a gossip subject at the meeting with the friends is very wellcomed...

The model of the western leader cannot be totally replicated in Romania, no matter how many training sessions on leadership are held or personal development conferences are delivered. If the romanian specific meets the western leadership culture then, outstanding and long lasting results can be obtained!

It has to be understood that the romanian people is the product of 2.000 years of harsh history, and it is carrying all the cultural and spiritual accumulations made in this period. If the western leader is a manager of processes, then in Romania the leader is more a ruler.

We have to be aware, it takes a strong will and big efforts to turn a romanian ruler in a true leader adapted to the romanian specific!

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