

Edifying the New Man: Romanian Communist Leadership's Mythopoeia

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Totalitarian regimes struggle to justify and support their actions by myths symbolizing their power. Such regimes employ state mythopoeia to transmit their philosophical truths to the people. Ideological control is achieved by means of new or remastered old myths. This paper deals with Communist mythmaking in the specific ideological environment of 1980s Romania, dominated by the Ceausescu dictatorship. In a systematic effort to change the consciousness of the people, Communist mythoplasts (propagandists) were tasked to implement a new, Socialist culture. One of the purposes of this state mythopoeia was to edify the New Man. This paper analyzes the myth of the New Man, a structural element of the Romanian Communist Party ideology, as presented in the doctrinal documents of the party. The significance of the New Man myth to an evolving concept of leadership is also considered from a perspective in which leadership is seen as an expression of the relationship between leaders and followers.

The idea that myths can or must be aimed at subordinating individuals to the desires of the state is not new. Plato described the ideal State where the guardians, the superior class made up of philosophers, rule over artisans and auxiliaries. Plato excluded the epic poets and dramatists from his Republic, considering them to be dangerous. Lyric poetry was permitted only if supervised and allowed only if moral (ascetic) character was produced. In Plato's vision, state mythopoeia had to be employed for the ideological control of the people. State mythopoeia started with the philosophers of the State who needed to fashion the prototypes to be followed according to the law. Then, the artisans, the official mythoplasts or propagandists, were specially commissioned to fabricate the myths that would impress upon the souls of the citizens. For these fabricated stories to leave a permanent imprint, old men and old women were compelled to repeat them to children. As a perfect mechanism, the State apparatus molded the man of the future using mythopoeia.

Totalitarian regimes of all times have always felt the need to justify and support their actions by myths symbolizing their power. Political myths represent the basic symbols of the political elite (Lasswell & Blumenstock, 1939/1970). As emerging gods, the elite have to communicate to their followers the new, *permanent* philosophical truths by means of new or

remastered old myths. The communication process is unbalanced. As Levi-Strauss (1973/1976) suggested, “men and the divine interlocutors are not partners in the same communication system” (p. 66). By manipulating symbols, myths, and tradition, the totalitarian state constructs a political culture in support of its political authority (Aronoff, 1986). Perhaps the most well known mythoplast of the 20th century, the Third Reich’s Minister of Propaganda Joseph Goebbels, raised myth making to a level previously unknown in Germany and, in the period 1933 - 1945, manipulated German culture toward a Nazi agenda. As known, a cornerstone of this agenda was the creation of the Aryan myth, a New Man concept that had wider ramifications for prosecution of the war and Nazi ideology.

Although different in both form and content from the ideology of the German Nazis, the doctrinal documents of the Romanian Communist Party (RCP) created the myth of a New Man, a Communist superhero belonging to the mythological side of Communist ideology. In our study, we traced the New Man mythopoeia as unfolded in the documents of the last two RCP congresses, the Thirteenth RCP Congress (1984) and the Fourteenth RCP Congress (1989), and the reports presented by the RCP Secretary General, Nicolae Ceausescu, at the two congresses. These reports were the ultimate, quintessential medium through which Ceausescu propagated, in ritualistic utterances, the party doctrine. The principles and system of belief presented in these RCP documents were considered true and beyond dispute by the party and needed to be entirely accepted by the rest of the people as norms. Furthermore, these documents of mythical proportions served to bolster Ceausescu’s own position in the party, state, and country as the preeminent leader.

The Communist mythmaking of 1980s Romania was specific to the ideological effort of the Ceausescu regime to change the people’s consciousness. In their quest to possess the soul of the individual, Communist mythoplasts promoted the new, Socialist culture. More specifically, their fundamental purpose was to edify the New Man, the guarantee of the Socialist future for the country.

In this paper, we use the term *edify* as the English word closest in meaning to the Romanian *a edifica*, a term employed by the RCP to describe the process of making the superhero and a new society. Perhaps the RCP’s mythmakers considered the simpler version *to build* too prosaic for the needed esoteric flavor of their mythmaking. The Webster (1980) definitions for edify are to (a) instruct, (b) improve morally and spiritually, (c) build, (d) establish, and (e) enlighten. Indeed, all these actions combined closely translate the ideological activities used by the party in propagating the new myth. To the extent that the term *edification* is value positive, the Romanian regime was able to bracket its New Man objective with a worthwhile, allegedly moral, flavor.

Theoretical Background

Myths

Etymologically, mythopoeia comes from the Greek *mythos*, meaning *myth*, and *poiein*, meaning *to make*. Mythopoeia is mythmaking, myth as transformed by mythoplasts. Levi-Strauss (1962/1969) considered mythopoeia an intellectual form of *bricolage*. Man, in his attempt to make sense of reality, takes either a scientific approach (the engineer) or a mythical one (the bricoleur). On one hand, the engineer has all the tools he or she needs to follow his or her social plan of domination and change. On the other hand, the bricoleur puts together the remains, debris

of history with whatever he or she has at hand to fulfill a more subtle plan. The bricoleurs make the myths and then take them for objective facts, trying to tack them onto the rest of objective knowledge. The power of bricolage, to some extent, resides in its inherent creativity. The absence of a prescribed scientific path to mythmaking allows the individual mythoplast to make and unmake history and culture almost at will, deploying whatever tools are at hand. While the linguistic connection between the terms mythopoeia, myopia, and utopia would make for an interesting study in what Berger and Luckmann (1966) referred to as the social construction of reality, this is outside the scope of the present paper.

The Platonic *mythos* is a story whose truth is less vouched for and whose purpose is symbolic. Plato opposed *mythos* to *logos*, a rational and accurate story that is true and reliable. Myths are traditional stories accompanying rituals purporting to tell of occasions when some institution or cult had their beginning and of the original act which set the precedent for this. Myths are “obscure in origin, protean in form, and ambiguous in meaning” (Ruthven, 1976, p. 1). They are the instruments by which man struggles to make experience intelligible to himself. According to Schorer (1960), myth is a “large, controlling image that gives philosophical meaning to the facts of ordinary life; that is, which has organizing value for experience” (p. 355).

In order to be accepted as myths, the works of a political elite need to be adopted by the rest of the people: “Individual works are all myths potentially, but it is their adoption through collective use, if it occurs, which actualizes their mythism” (Detienne, 1981/1986, p. 47). In totalitarian regimes, the totalitarian state forces the collective adoption of its ideological opus by putting pressure on the individual, striving for the total invasion of the individual. While the state manifests itself more obviously through actions in the material realm, the spiritual invasion exists in subtler forms. Analyzing the Soviet ideology, Shlapentokh (1986) unfolded its two-level structure:

The first, pragmatic level reflects the “real” material life of the people and the policy of the Soviet political leadership, while the second, mythological level consists of various myths having little in common with the “objective reality.” . . . Official mythology is the main way of legitimizing the Soviet system and demands only compliance with the status quo. In its mythological activity, Soviet ideology exerts special efforts to impose the secondary reality on the Soviet people. The Soviet people are suggested to live already in a world in which Soviet mythological values are implemented in life, and they, as well as their leaders, behave as these values demand. (p. 12)

Shlapentokh considered such official values as the leading role of the working class, internationalism, social equality, and Socialist democracy to be part of the mythological side of the official ideology. Planning, Socialist property, patriotism, science, education, and family make up the pragmatic level of ideology.

Doctrines do not become operative unless they are capable of generating some sort of imaginative symbolism. Kertzer (1988), for instance, argued that power must be expressed through symbolic guises and, therefore, “symbolism is necessary to prop up the governing political order” (p. 174). The mythical New Man proposed by the RCP was part of its struggle of imposing the new Socialist cultural paradigm. According to Frye (1976), a myth is a “cultural model, expressing the way in which man wants to shape and reshape the civilization he himself has made” (p. 21). The New Man was the needed symbol of the emerging Romanian Socialist culture. Edifying him became an important goal of the Communist ideology. Although employed in classic analyses of capitalist relations, Lukács’ (1971) concept of reification is appropriate in this instance: “A relation between people takes on the character of a thing and thus acquires a

'phantom objectivity,' an autonomy that seems so strictly rational and all-embracing as to conceal every trace of its fundamental nature" (p. 83). Subsequently, a successful myth is a myth that, in the minds of people, comes to be equated with truth or reality.

Myths and Ideology

If a political myth is accepted within a state by a large fraction of its people, that myth becomes ideology. Ideology, therefore, is actively and explicitly concerned with the establishment and defense of values and beliefs. Subsequently, ideology converges on ideological consciousness in its two interpretations: (a) "a supernatural, religious *ersatz* world that affords man an illusory compensation for his real misery" (Barth, 1974/1976, p. 100) and (b) "a philosophy whose sole purpose is to offer an apology for existing social conditions" (Barth, p. 100). In the specific context of this study, ideology was a major driving social force in Communist Romania. Furthermore, Communist ideology was employed to provide the necessary meaning and reinforcement to Ceausescu's leadership. Central to this ideology was the myth of the New Man.

Myths, whether conceived as beliefs, historical narratives, or fantasy legends, are compelling forms of ideology. Ideology is quite literally what its name suggests: the logic of an idea. Its subject matter is history to which the idea is applied. As Arendt (1958) put it, the result of this application is "not a body of statements about something that is, but the unfolding of a process which is in constant change" (p. 468). The myth of the New Man, the godly man created by the RCP in its own image, was built around the becoming of an all-powerful man. The myth was meant to further establish the domination of the Communist state over its citizens. After all, ideology represents the implicit power behind propaganda because of its alleged ability to convince the public to believe in that which is unreal.

An ideology treats the course of events as though it followed the same law as the logical exposition of its idea. Again, Arendt (1958) considered that "ideologies pretend to know the mysteries of the whole historical process—the secrets of the past, the intricacies of the present, the uncertainties of the future—because of the logic inherent in their respective ideas" (p. 469). This was precisely the working ideological strategy of the RCP.

Boudon (1986/1989) proposed two sets of definitions of ideology, those based on the criterion of true and false and those not based on this criterion. This distinction is unambiguous even within the Marxist tradition. In Boudon's interpretation, on one hand, Marx considered ideology a science of ideas in which ideas are truthful representations of reality. Nevertheless, for Marx, ideology is a false science in the fact that it reflects ideas which, in actuality, result from the material interaction of social factors. In Marxist interpretation, the process resembles a *camera obscura* transformation of real objects into upside-down images. On the other hand, Boudon argues that Lenin was less interested in whether the ideology was a truthful representation of reality or not and more interested in its effectiveness. Lenin strongly believed that ideology is a useful tool to be used as a weapon in the class struggle. The Leninist interpretation has been fundamental to Communist propaganda of all times as ideology has always been considered a tool of forcing and enforcing the desired social changes. Unsurprisingly, it was this Leninist view of ideology as a social weapon that the RCP used in building its myth of the New Man. The fabrication of Communist myths was the natural outcome of the RCP's propaganda. If propaganda was the action through which the RCP openly forced its dogma on the people, then mythopoeia was the act of fabricating myths and insinuating them into

the culture. Following the Leninist practice, the Romanian Communist mythopoeia was deliberately focused on social change.

The Myth of the New Man

In the 1950s, a significant moment in critical studies was the shift from rhetoric to myth analysis. This shift engendered a new species of criticism: myth criticism. Frye (1957) stated that all stories can be examined not only in terms of their individual, stylistic, literary qualities but also in terms of the overarching myths that they reincarnate. In our study, analyzing the mythopoeia of the New Man in the selected doctrinal texts of the RCP was a difficult task. The complex myth found in the documents we analyzed was veiled by the conceptual, discursive, propagandistic language of the ideologues. Probing beneath the outer layers of the doctrinal texts with their stock Socialist ideology became the means whereby we uncovered the ideational concept of the New Man.

Aronoff (1986) considered that one of the reasons for the strength of a myth is that it “presents a more lucid and compelling image than do abstract principles. In addition, an account of the past which justifies a present course of action is attractive to most people” (p. 17). In its simplest form, the myth-as-story underscores the power of the narrative in communicating meaning and may reveal the force of myth creation in all cultural contexts from preschool stories to media campaigns. As a political myth, the myth of a New Man is built to mobilize collective action by posing collective responsibilities. The Romanian Communist mythoplasts selected and manipulated symbols of the traditional culture to recreate a political identity that was both linked to the past and made compatible with the political goals of the Communist future. The formula was to construct the future in the present and to deploy the myth as an agent of cultural change.

As with all Communist myths, the New Man mythopoeia had a strategic appreciation of time. As Mannheim (1936) suggested, in myths “time is always experienced as a series of strategic points” (p. 244). This Communist superman was the desired cultural bridge between Romania’s past and its Communist future. It is commonly accepted that every faith and every state has its own myth (Gorner, 1992). Naturally, Romanian overtones of the Socialist culture promoted by the state ideologues and mythoplasts became part of the myth-making effort. They became evident at the 1976 ideological conference of the RCP. For instance, one of its outcomes was the ideological campaign developed around the slogan *Cantarea Romaniei* (Hymn to Romania). The artistic festival associated with the Hymn became the potent ritualistic arm of the Communist mythopoeic effort. The ritual and ceremony of the Hymn endowed the RCP’s political actions with a degree of legitimacy warranted by Romanian history. As Gilbert (1976) observed, the party was using a “concerted campaign to enhance its image as a national force which is carrying on the traditions of the great liberators of Romanian history” (p. 304).

According to Highet (1996), myths can be interpreted on the basis of three main principles: “One is to say that they describe single historical facts. The second is to take them as symbols of permanent philosophical truths. The third is to hold that they are reflections of natural processes, eternally recurring” (p. 183). Although the best mythoplasts seek to create myths that reflect each of these three principles, the reality is that myths are usually less grounded. In that regard, the New Man was a myth designed mainly to pass the Communist permanent philosophical truths on to the Romanian people.

In the next section of the paper, the texts of the RCP doctrinal documents addressing the New Man are deconstructed following the definitions and characteristics of myths proposed by

Murray (1960) to the chosen Communist myth. The purpose of the method was threefold: (a) to prove that the New Man concept has mythical characteristics, (b) to actually analyze the myth, and (c) to identify the broader leadership framework within which myth making occurs as each of the individual elements of the myth identified by Murray has a functional role in the leadership framework.

Descriptive Definition

Murray (1960) stated that a myth manifestly consists of the “essential features of an important . . . situation that has a basic theme in which at least one extraordinary . . . psychic entity is involved” (p. 319). That *important situation* of the New Man was described by the party as the beginning of a new stage in the development of the Romanian Communist society: “Now that we are entering a superior era of development of our Socialist society, we need to be conscious that it is an objective imperative to build the New Man” (Ceausescu, 1989, p. 3). Ceausescu (1989) further stressed the building of this myth: “The great economical–social and political changes that have occurred both in our country and internationally, the great achievements of science and technology, of human knowledge generally, all these demand the edifying of the new man” (p. 4).

The *extraordinary psychic entity* was the Communist Superman, a man of great importance for the national being. He was not the average, all-too-human mortal, but a man becoming god, critical for the welfare of society. Ceausescu (1989) defined this superhero as a builder of the socialism and communism, with a large horizon of theoretical, scientific, and professional knowledge, with a militant revolutionary spirit. The New Man was a perennial revolutionary, forever leading the transformation of society, with the Communist goal in mind. Other defining characteristics of the New Man, as presented by Ceausescu (1984), were his Socialist revolutionary patriotism and his love of country and fellow citizens. The New Man was devoted to the achievements of socialism, working ceaselessly at building the Socialist and Communist future in his fatherland. He also defended the revolutionary achievements, the independence, and the sovereignty of his fatherland.

Referential Definition

A myth needs a phenomenal reference, allowing the manifest components of the myth to “mean what they literally appear to mean or may stand for anything else that is conceivable by man” (Murray, 1960, p. 330). The myth of the New Man was a collective myth, reflecting desirable actions and aspirations of the whole society. The language in which the expected actions of the mythical Man were depicted was general, norm-laden: “the New man needs to keep alive the renewing, revolutionary spirit of the party and to increase its leading role” (Ceausescu, 1984, p. 4). However, the lack of precision in describing the New Man’s mythical actions was strategic, allowing room for future adjustments in the party’s ideology, rather than reactive.

A myth has a clear temporal reference, described by Murray (1960) as “essential features of imagined situations or events that occurred in the past, are destined to occur in the future, or are now recurring” (p. 333). In this regard, the New Man was a prospective myth, pointing toward an ultimate better world—the Communist society. To some extent, this better world was conceived in utopian terms as the world was remade in the image of the New Man. As an expression of this idealized construct, Ceausescu (1984) charged the New Man with “a historical

mission to lead the Romanian society to higher peaks of Socialist civilization, toward the fulfillment of the golden dream of mankind—the Communist society” (p. 4). The heroism of the New Man was fully supported and inspired by the past of the country. The New Man was the fulfillment of the ancestors’ dreams, ancestors who fought “heroic battles, animated by their trust in the Romanian people, in his independent future” (Ceausescu, 1984, p. 5).

Functional Definition

After estimating the powers of a myth in terms of its social scope and temporal span, the influential representation accomplished by a myth needs to be estimated in terms of the average intensity of its desired effects, “these effects being of five classes: (a) cynosural–emotional–memorable–inspirational, (b) convictional, (c) evaluational, (d) conational, and (e) integrational” (Murray, 1960, p. 335).

The myth of the New Man was designed to be the focus of the rapt attention, thought, and talk. To elicit this cynosural function of the myth, the party put the New Man at the center of its ideological production. The emotional effect was expected to be significant especially when mythoplasts addressed those who were easier to mold, the younger generation, as the generation that supposedly had not been “spoiled” or contaminated by older myths: “Dear young friends, all your actions should be in the spirit of the revolutionary romanticism” (Ceausescu, 1984, p. 5). The New Man myth engendered hope, aiming for emphatic identification of the people with the proposed myth. Moreover, the Party needed a memorable myth, with recurrent imprint in the minds of its receptors. Thus, the myth was presented frequently and consistently every time a major political RCP activity took place. The myth, as presented at these major events, suffered little or no changes in time. As expected, the two analyzed texts, although separated by 4 years, showed little variation in the description of the New Man. Repetition was supposed to produce retention.

The last item of the first class of myth functions is, according to Murray (1960), the inspirational function. Myth needs to inspire receptors with artistic gifts to reproduce and propagate the myth. The Romanian Communist mythoplasts considered this function to be crucial for the viability of their mythical product:

We must create new literary opuses, with a higher patriotic content, new movie pictures, and plays mirroring the life and achievements of our people, in the spirit of the revolutionary, Socialist humanism. . . . We need new revolutionary and patriotic songs, inspired from the life of our people and his melodious spirit. . . . All the arts are called to build the new man, inspired by the process of edifying him. (Ceausescu, 1989, p. 4)

A myth needs to elicit belief or faith in its validity in order to be convictional. The New Man myth needed, therefore, to be perceived as truth, not falsehood. Subsequently, Communist ideologues aimed at transforming their myths into objective realities. It was important for them to pay close attention to the myths’ validity. After all, the bottom-line value of a myth like the New Man was its ability to convince people. A convictional myth gives legitimacy to its makers.

The myth of the New Man was also evaluational. It propagated, revived, and re-established veneration for what it represented. The New Man was highly valued by the party and was sacred in the conscience of its carriers. The entire ideological and educative activity of the RCP was centered on edifying the superhero.

In Murray’s (1960) opinion, the conational function of a myth has two opposite manifestations: (a) educational [*sic*], guiding and conducting valued actions, and (b) deterrent,

suppressing disvalued actions. The New Man myth had both manifestations of the conational function. The hero, as presented by the RCP doctrinal documents, needed to struggle against any retrograde capitalist ideas that either infiltrated from abroad or were remnants of the past Romanian bourgeoisie. The New Man had to take firm action against any manifestation of nationalism, chauvinism, mysticism, obscurantism, egotism, laziness, and dishonesty (Ceausescu, 1984). On the other hand, the educational [*sic*] function of the myth manifested in its alleged capacity of serving a model for all the individuals in the Romanian society. They were expected to identify themselves with the proposed superman, always just, honest, a bearer of the new Socialist ethics. As a collective educational [*sic*] myth, the New Man represented the ongoing conflict between good and bad forces. Conceived to some extent as a zero sum game, the gains of one side were interpreted as losses for the other. Viewed in such calculation of gains and losses terms, the importance of total victory and the silencing of critics may be better understood. As the purveyor of a new cultural ethos, the Communist propagandists waged its New Man war using weapons (strategies) that were both offensive and defensive, both positive (in a task-oriented, value-free sense) and negative. According to Murray, the forces which are in line with the group's welfare are the good ones, engaged in a crucial conflict with the malefic forces:

It is a struggle-to-the-finish between the forces of good and evil in one or another guise—light and darkness, renewal and decay, evolution and stagnation, unity and disunity, conservation and destruction, life and death—forces which have been commonly embodied in two opposing supernatural beings (e.g. God and Devil) and more recently in two opposing -isms (e.g. Communism and Capitalism). (p. 338)

The last functional characteristic of a myth, integration, is represented by the New Man collective attribute. This myth unified the Romanian society, preventing it from disintegration. The hero was to be a “force which shines like the bright sun on the road to Communism, the era when all the people will be masters of their destinies” (Ceausescu, 1989, p. 6). The party also used the integrative mythical function to smooth the ethnic differences between the Romanian majority and the ethnic minorities living on the Romanian territory. This integrative aspect of the myth is particularly important in a differentiated society where a constellation of sociocultural differences constantly hammer at the national integrity of the state. Integration becomes the nation-building component of the myth with identity and belonging as vital subcomponents. In this regard, the New Man spoke a language common to all, regardless of their ethnicity, the language of labor, as Ceausescu (1989) himself labeled it.

A myth must be represented in “words spoken by an appointed agent during the event's ceremonial enactment at a prescribed place and time” (Murray, 1960, p. 339). The appointed agent of the Romanian New Man myth was the Secretary General of the party. His speeches were always highly ritualistic. There was hardly any major speech of Ceausescu that addressed the ideology of the party without referring to the myth of the New Man. The rituals included carefully staged, “spontaneous” outpouring of popular support for the Party, the leader, and their ideology. While the New Man myth was analytically distinct from the personage of its chief mythoplast, the Secretary General, in practice, the two can become synonymous, at least implicitly. In the eyes of the people, the leader took on the characteristics of the New Man earlier than his followers. Ceausescu, the Supreme Leader, became the archetypal New Man. The mouthpiece became the phenomenal reference who, in turn, became the hero himself (the New Man). Lenin, Mao, and, to a lesser extent, General Tito of the former Yugoslavia were exemplars of this process. However, less powerful but similar identifications of the messenger with the

message or objective can be found in other leaders from FDR and Winston Churchill to Mahatma Gandhi and Nelson Mandela.

Causal Definition

A myth is also “a product of imaginations oriented and sustained by one or more basic needs and feelings in response to a critical situation which is experienced, consciously or unconsciously, by the society as whole, by members of a class, or by individuals as persons” (Murray, 1960, p. 342). The New Man myth was designed to prevent intolerable conflicts, curing contradictions that might appear in the Socialist system. The New Man was the conscious builder of the Communist future. He understood the society and its possible conflicts and solved them according to his overall plan—Communism. The myth, in this sense, was a therapy more for the system than for the individual. The New Man was presented as a powerful change tool that would alter the character of Romanian society. Convincing the people to accept a degree of suffering—the importance of present sacrifices—was a necessary part of the myth making.

The Mythopoeic New Man

The previous analysis finds the New Man as a collective prospective Communist myth with clear inspirational, educational [*sic*], conational, and integrational functions. Each of these functions plays into a broader leadership agenda in which the objectives of the individual (Ceausescu) become an expression of the organization (RCP). Both are then reinterpreted as being similar in scope with a manifest national destiny.

Edifying the New Man is mythopoeic in nature. Slochower (1976) stated that mythopoeia conveys a specific drama in three acts with an epilogue. The drama begins with a disrupted unity in the circumstances of the hero—a failure of conviction, a disturbance of faith, or a moral fall. The New Man’s surrogate drama began with the hero being uncomfortable with the Socialist present which, while better than the bourgeois past, was nevertheless far from the Communist bright future. The New Man identified new contradictions in the Socialist society and articulated a leadership agenda that attempted to solve these contradictions. This inspired a quest, a pursuit of the social circumstances previously taken for granted.

The quest, the second act of the mythopoeic drama, involves the hero in a transgression against what his social group regards as a natural or sacred order. It is now the time when the hero becomes the agent of transformation of his culture. Transforming himself continuously, the New Man was always one step into the future. He was a perennial revolutionary: “The revolutionary process will continue even in the Communist society, it will never end” (Ceausescu, 1984, p. 5). The hero was a permanent agent of change of his society.

The third act of Slochower’s (1976) mythopoeia is a kind of homecoming, a recreation, or a rebirth. The hero revitalizes his relationship to the tradition he has violated. The victory of the mythopoeic hero is the victory of social morality. The hero alters the tradition in its parts that have become corrupt and stale. It is Communism that the New Man was supposed to bring into being, the new order built from the ashes of the old one. In the Communist mythopoeia, the New Man seems to never find his homecoming as he restlessly is preoccupied with the best society to be achieved by mankind—Communism. This set the stage for an ongoing revolution or the endless remaking of tomorrow’s world.

Slochow (1976) considered that a tragic epilogue usually ends the three-act mythopoeia: the hero's final sacrifice. Although it would be easy to interpret the 1989 revolution and subsequent overthrow of Ceausescu and the RPI as the unexpected resolution of the New Man myth, the truth is perhaps more blurry. Some might argue that the complex interleaving of individual, organizational, and national factors complicates matters and that Communist mythoplasts clearly do not allow for tragic endings. Rather, the hero's strivings seem to be resolved in a remote, paradisiac finale.

Pseudo Epilogue

In the final analysis, the Romanian Communist heroic New Man is nothing but a variant of Homo Sovieticus, a type of living being generated by the conditions of a society under a Communist regime. The dangers inherent in a lurking New Man myth are captured in Zinoviev's (1982/1985) characterization of Homosos:

The virus of Homossosery . . . is the gravest disease that can afflict mankind because it reaches to the very essence of the human being. If a man has sensed the Homosus in himself and tasted the poisons of Homossosery, it is more difficult to cure him of his disease than it is to return a burnt-out alcoholic or a junkie to a healthy life.

Evolution-wise the Homosos is not decadent. On the contrary, he is the highest product of civilization. He is superman. He is universal. If need be, he can commit any frightfulness. Where it is possible, he can possess every virtue. There are no secrets which he cannot explain. There are no problems which he cannot solve. He is naive and simple. He is vacuous. He is omniscient and all-pervasive. He is replete with wisdom. He is a particle of the universe that bears the whole universe within itself. He is ready for anything and anyone. He is even ready for the best. He awaits it, although he doesn't believe in it. He hopes for the worst. He is Nothing; that is to say, Everything. He is God, pretending to be the Devil. He is the Devil, pretending to be God. He is in every man. (p. 199)

While few people actually believed any Communist myth during the Ceausescu regime, the damaging effects of the Communist ideology appeared to linger, surprisingly, after the fall of Communism. Even though Ceausescu had some sympathy from the West for holding out against Soviet pressure, the economic, social, and political changes in Romanian society, much like in other post-Communist societies, have been more or less hesitant. Whether the Communist New Man myth was, in fact, more powerful than most are prepared to accept remains a lingering question. What cannot be denied is the inertia which has slowed down the transition of most ex-Communist countries from the old to the new social realities. While the poor economic conditions left behind by the Communist regimes were an objective reality influencing people's beliefs, the effect of Communist mythopoeia should also be taken into consideration. Apparently, the effect of Communist ideology survived the demise of the social system. This inertia has possible implications for leadership development and organizational change. Perhaps, as indirectly suggested by this study, ideological mythoplasts have a more significant impact on followers than social engineers.

Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels (1848/2002) began *The Communist Manifesto* with the following statement: "A specter is haunting Europe—the specter of communism" (p. 27). These words are of greater actuality today than they were at that time. The only difference is that the specter is a ghost of a dying creature—the New Man that Communist regimes wanted to create. A hybrid result of adaptation to the harsh material condition of Socialism on one hand and a result

of transformation through mythopoeic ideology on the other, the New Man did not know what to do with the new liberty he suddenly faced. Specifically, Paler (1995) considered the New Man to be one of the dangers still facing the Romanian society. Because the edification of the New Man was partially accomplished by the Communist regime, Paler believed that it would not be easy for anybody to become, again, the Old Man, that is, a normal human being.

Conclusion

According to Rosenbach and Taylor (2001), there are almost as many definitions of leadership as there are people who have attempted to define it. However, in its broadest expression, leadership has been defined by Crawford, Brungardt, and Maughan (2000) as an interactive process of influence that happens between leaders and followers within a larger social sphere that promotes a collective, common good. Although the common good criterion is interpretable as it is specific to the sociocultural context, this definition probably holds good for the Romanian situation discussed in this paper. Subsequently, an understanding of the relationship between leaders and followers is important to this paper's discussion of myth.

The New Man myth fits squarely into a transformational leadership model to the extent that it seeks to transform the values, behaviors, and attitudes of Romanians. Of the four types of transformational behaviors as proposed by Bass and Avolio (1990) (idealized influence, individualized consideration, inspirational motivation, and intellectual stimulation), myth making seems to be a viable method for inspirational motivation and intellectual stimulation of the followers. The myth analysis provided in this paper appears to support this claim. As Schein (1992) suggested, role modeling and stories, legends, and myths are mechanisms through which leaders can shape culture. In Schein's interpretation, such myths are a reflection of the culture, not a determinant of it. That, obviously, differs from the Leninist interpretation presented earlier in this paper that ideology and, implicitly, myths can be used as weapons of change. Schein also indicated that the influence of myths is limited in cultures where open communication makes it possible to detect false myths. In Communist societies, state's myths are rarely questioned, at least officially.

The New Man myth was meant to transform not only the values, behaviors, and attitudes of Romanians but also societal goals, structures, and processes. These are accomplished through the Communist emphasis on characteristics that include symbolic leader behavior, visionary and inspirational messages, nonverbal communication, an appeal to ideological values, display of confidence in self and followers, and leader expectations for follower self-sacrifice and for performance beyond the call of duty. This fits in with the shared view of charismatic leadership (Howell & Avolio, 1995; Sankowsky, 1995) as one or all of the following:

1. An omnipotent archetype (leader as parent) whom they believe will nurture and guide them;
2. A mystical archetype, in touch with higher truths, who knows the way and knows the answers;
3. A heroic archetype, perhaps derived from past achievements, who can move mountains; and
4. A value-driven archetype, concerned with the collective and able to empower it, who is pure in spirit.

In the traditional binary expression of the relationship, while the leader leads, the follower simply follows. Both are bound into an inextricable leadership relationship in which the roles of

each are clearly known. Burns (1998) proposed instead that leadership occurs across a field of players made up of leaders, opposers, apathetics, and supporters. In the Romanian society of the 1980s, leadership was quite clearly equated with members of the RCP and specifically with its General Secretary Nicolae Ceausescu. The citizens of Romania were forced to be the followers. They were, in essence, those for whom the New Man myth was being created. Furthermore, they were expected to embrace the ideology that was being intentionally constructed for them. The myth of the New Man was created within a totalitarian framework in which the roles and responsibilities of leaders and followers were clearly circumscribed. The process of developing a Communist mythopoeia intersected with an evolving view of Romanian leadership that was essentially autocratic and predicated on a conceptualization of the follower as passive. The New Man myth becomes an example of destructive transformational leadership. Rosenbach and Taylor (2001) noted that in transformational leadership, the leader is involved in strong personal identification with the leader. Group members are also encouraged to join in a shared vision of the future. In this particular case, the transformational leader is the political entity of the RCP and its key functionary, General Secretary Ceausescu.

As discussed in this paper, under the aegis of the Communist Party, Romanians were encouraged to perform beyond expectations, and an awareness of the importance of specific outcomes was promoted. Central to the inculcation of a shared value and belief system was the development of a myth that encouraged followers to transcend their own self-interests. After all, transformational leaders, whether constructive or destructive, enable followers to develop a mental picture of the vision to transform purpose into action. Further, myth criticism approaches in organizational leadership research would advance our understanding of the power of myths in shaping organizational culture and identify the possible benefits and dangers of manipulating culture in organizational change.

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