

How a Management Crisis Occurs

A Fragment of a Provincial Music High School History*

Unconscious mistakes are repeated more often.

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Abstract—The process of crisis formation of a top-manager appears on the basis of his mistakes; still critical remarks at the first stage are not taken seriously. The markers for the fall of the leader's authority are: selection of personnel on the basis of personal devotion, neglecting professional interests, ignoring the achievements of individual specialists, etc.

Keywords—Authority of a leader; authoritarian forms of management; tendentiousness of the work results evaluation; ignoring; overestimation of own merits

I. LOSS OF AUTHORITY

In the beginning of 80-ies of the previous century in a music high school of the provincial Russian town Magnitogorsk, events start taking place, which, as it became clear later on, got to be nunciates of a brewing crisis resulted in a change of leadership.

For long years, the music high school was headed by a well-known Russian musician and an eminent representative of Russia's musical culture Semion Grigoryevich Eidinov, who was held in high estimation at town's musicians and residents. He was a large-scale person; he was able to speak out in a bright manner, to charm audience with his intelligence, erudition and unorthodoxy of his thinking; he possessed excellent memory and attractiveness in communication. In short, he was a very interesting person. Many were pleased to be close to him, including myself. Besides, his captivating feature was that naivety, which, as a rule, is inherent to people having a pure, light and childishly open, confiding soul.

Well, let me give just one example being indicative that S.G. Eidinov was a man with romantic ply of the character. Once he stepped up to me and said, "Sasha, come to my office for a minute". When we stayed on one, he gave me a newspaper article about UFO, waited until I read it through and with an expectancy of something mysterious, he said, "I believe in it, do you?" He believed in miracles. I shared the same view, so I said it to him, notwithstanding that it contravened the official interpretation. Vying with each other, newspapers denied facts of aliens staying on Earth and along with it qualified people convinced otherwise to mentally not

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quite healthy ones. S.G. Eidinov was not in fear to look like a man of the kind in my eyes. On the course of the conversation, it became clear that both of us wanted fervently to become witnesses of a meeting between a human and an extraterrestrial intelligence and see fruits of a supposed cooperation with our own eyes.

It seemed, everyone admired S.G. Eidinov, but from a certain moment, some colleagues, whom he relied on constantly in his activities, started criticizing him. As a leader, an ordinary teacher came out, who occupied with social activities at the same time. Indisputably, this group had its arguments. One could reproach S.G. Eidinov that with years less and less time he dedicated to a music high school management and to the educational process itself (he was almost 70). After his appearance for a short while in the music high school, soon, he used to go out to a chapel choir, art director and main conductor of which he was.

A real administrator of the music high school was deputy-director for studies Mr. Z. Though diligent and devoted to the educational establishment, unfortunately, he was not a professional musician. In 60-ies after quitting the army in major rank, he came to the music high school as a curriculum director. Despite of presence of interesting and talented musicians in the personnel, he was chosen of so many candidates. And it was not a blind coincidence. While fortifying his own positions, for a position of his first deputy, Semion Grigoryevich looked out a man devoted to him and devoid of leader ambitions.

His *protégé* was a smart and shrewd man inherently, but his habit to command order discipline, and first of all his professional incompetence and lack of a musical apprehension hindered to him and more often than not caused dissatisfaction in the team. With lapse of time, he and his spouse, who also was not a musician in her education, according to their own level of competence created environs from "own" people, who patronized him heavily. As for communication with rank teachers, it was quite formal, which got a catalyst of a deepening crisis.

The said above should be assigned to subjective factors. Along to them, there were objective ones, too. In the society, a non-acceptance rose of management authoritarian forms

and methods. The authority, a fundament of which was built up on the ideological dictate of party nomenclature, continued making an industry leader of S.G. Eidinov, a leader of Magnitogorsk's musicians in a hope for his influence strengthening on the creative medium. But as soon as his apprehension overgrew a weight of any town's chiefs, instantaneously, they took alarm. It is noticed that nationwide problems and global crisis phenomena tend to personification: an accumulated by a society non-acceptance of central management methods starts focused on a personality of an immediate supervisor. A substitution takes place. And this is exactly what happened in the music high school on the back of crisis deepening in the country.

By beginning of 80-ies, on the top notch of society and in the opponents' group inside of the music high school, an intention matured to displace S.G. Eidinov from the director position and to appoint that teacher, who whispered regularly behind the director's back to colleagues and town administration about shortages in the director's work. In the mayor's office of the town, a committee was established, which worked with unscreened bias and clearly extemporized violations from nothing. What seemed amazing was a fast rumor mongering about numerous gross infringements, though never any results of the committee's work have been published. The developing situation caused a great damage to S.G. Eidinov's reputation as far as it was oriented at ground softening for his dismissal. The rumors originated in town's authorities' offices exaggerated many times by Eidinov's opponents inside of the music high school.

The opposition leader was reputed as a fairly good specialist; he possessed a phenomenal memory, excellent musical gift and other professional advantages. Nevertheless, according to opinion of many, he was a person neither quite orderly-minded nor disciplined; he did not fit to a leadership work. Probably, for the first time feeling myself responsible for the educational establishment fate, I tried and applied to the opponents asking them not to destroy the fragile world of our creative team and more to it, to use our best efforts to its strengthening.

By that time, I have got already to cognize the joy of creative activities gratifying to the interesting work, into the depth of which I submerged myself headfirst. I taught, conducted a chamber orchestra, successfully arranged two open contests of All-Russian contests of young performers "Race cup of Ural", acted on stage and – I was scared very much of a possible breakdown of the dear to my heart atmosphere of creative work. In its turn, among most part of coworkers of the music high school, another attitude prevailed. A reason for it was the fact that their interests were focused mainly in pedagogic activities. Hence, to a great extent, they stayed dependent on management processes that were formed by the deputy-director.

Soon, events whirled wildly. After final finding their position with personnel decisions, the authorities proposed to S.G. Eidinov leaving one of posts taken by him. He refused. Then in attempt of enfeebling positions of the unwanted director, they fired his deputy. At the same time, the

municipal administration stopped trusting to the opposition leader, too, as he proved himself an infantile contemplator in that arduous period. So, his candidacy was rejected as hopeless.

II. DIFFICULTIES OF A NEW MANAGER

Some time later, the deputy-director position of the music high school was proposed to me. I should admit, the proposal seemed to me tempting. By that moment the position was vacant, so there was not a necessity in ducking a curtsy to my predecessor. Prior to giving my consent, I asked, whether S.G. Eidinov knew about it. I was given a reply that Eidinov had hardly survived after infarct and, according to medical regulations, he would stay on a rehabilitation about six months. Well, someone must run this creative educational establishment. Besides, they told to me, the municipal administration had an opinion that the director had to retire on a pension due to his age. I replied that in the music high school, there was no person, who could replace him and still one might learn much from him. After obtaining a promise from the municipal administration to leave Eidinov in the director position, I agreed and took the deputy office.

First of all, to the teachers, I handed out their long-awaited salaries delayed because of the managerial mess and arranged well the educational process and then immediately I drove to the clinic, where Semion Grigoryevich stayed, and informed him on my first steps. It turned out, this information did not do any good to his heart: he started blaming me for my consent on the appointment as deputy-director without discussing it with him.

A new stage of my activities began. It seemed to me before that *a manager's work evaluation is built up according to results of his work*. In life, everything turned out to be more complicated: anything I said was subjected to a cruelest criticism from the part of Semion Grigoryevich's environs. If a canteen floor was under reparation works, to all authority channels, anonymous letters were directed with accusations to my side with relation to *ugly* color of freshly painted walls. If a festival or a concert was conducted, a repertoire was criticized. And from all sides, reproaches spattered for a traditions violation. Oh, those notorious *traditions!* There sounded a statement in those letters: everything that was done before was good, while the today's innovations were a mere disgrace. What is interesting: constantly blames sounded in undue utilization of state finances. One would be falling under the impression that the complainants wanted compromising not only me but also the municipality administrators issued the order on my appointment. Someone would say: this is not seriously! Well, most seriously! *In a society always, people are present, who are eager showing themselves as state defenders.*

Sometimes it came up to absurd: on a really tiny fact specified in an anonymous letter, several committees were established and they grilled teachers, students, administration members, etc. The teachers of the music high school were sick and tired of such "taking to pieces". When a critical mass filled up the cup of patience, the team rebelled against. At the next meeting with committee members, teachers announced that they had no desire to be hostages of "masters

of backstage affairs” and asked the examiners to leave the educational establishment.

After this incident, the complainants became quiet – That was my first time when I *realized the collective power!*

To attention of managers! In a case that you would be announced a potential manager’s successor without his consent, be ready to the following recurrences:

–A fault will be alleged to you for a crisis created by a previous manager;

–You’ll be blamed for a violation of sacred traditions established by your predecessor;

–Complaints will be written against you;

–For a long time you’ll find yourself in a quarrel with environs of the previous manager;

–You’ll be blamed in national intolerance;

–You’ll encounter prepossession to yourself from part of a number of administrators of a higher rank that has fellow feelings in secret for the previous manager;

–For a long times, rumors would be spread about you as a not good person, intriguer, careerist (walking over dead bodies, etc.).

The situation will bring conclusion to your head that all this was arranged by your predecessor. Do not believe to your eyes, ears, friends and enemies! The listed above is provoked first of all by manager’s environs members and not by himself. Losing their positions, desperately they fight for their place under the sun expressing by such a way their disagreement with changing of their positions in the team.

Advice: There is no point in fighting either with the predecessor or with his environs. What is needed to do is to understand them and help them adapting to new conditions.

What really troubled me more was a position of central mass-media, representatives of which came to us in a hope to settle down the conflict between S.G. Eidinov with the authorities. As for criticizing of the municipal administration, they shrunk of it. So many strived recouping it out on the potential successor. Realizing the complicity of the situation, I stopped speaking both on Eidinov’s merits and shortages of his managerial activities avoiding any attempts of embroiling me in discussion of such topics. In my opinion, such approach was not fruitless: the life started to be getting better.

Several months later, when S.G. Eidinov had recovered, step-by-step, not without difficulties, between us, a contact was established; and for a while, we worked hand in hand. He came seeing me and I seeing him for important information exchange; we sought advice of each other, how to decide problems better. There seemed, the business-related communication was rectified. Enthusiastically, I ran errands by the director: he possessed a wise viewing of a situation. Notwithstanding, after all, resentments having had accumulated in the team to the municipal administration and the opposition made S.G. Eidinov leaving his position. In February 1982, he wrote down his letter of resignation. He

made the chapel choir his main occupation, while I was appointed director of the music high school.

From the moment of assumption of the director’s office, I realized that my colleagues hoped for better things from me that just mere readjustment of the educational process and successful self-sustaining practice. Among lots of problems that excited musicians, as a first-priority one, I considered the problem of restoration of a historically true picture of the musical culture and education development in the town Magnitogorsk: in our team, there were many teachers devoted many years of their lives to serving to the musical culture development of the young town.

The fact was that S.G. Eidinov came to the young being-under construction town in 1938. After that, he worked for some time in a music school; in 1939, he was invited for a position of deputy-director in the already opened by that time music high school, which had its material base. By that instant of time in the town, a stringed ensemble at a radio-committee and choir groups have already functioned; good musicians came and worked in the town for some while; but never the people, who established the music high school and contributed a lot into the town’s musical culture development had been mentioned anywhere. A name of a first director of the music high school was unknown; any clarity was absent, to whom the initiative of its opening belonged, how it was established in such difficult for the country prewar years. About this, Semion Grigoryevich had never spoken. A picture took shape as if everything started with his arrival.

The only person, who confronted such a version, was a teacher of special piano Yu.G. Pisarenko, who had historical documents at his disposal, and based on them it was possible to reconstruct the history of first year of Magnitogorsk’s musical culture development. But being out of favor at S.G. Eidinov, he was forced leaving the town. According to documents stored by him, there was a great deal of people devoted their talents and energy to building-up of town’s musical culture. Nevertheless, by a twist of fate, they could not say a word about their merits: ones perished at the fronts of Second World war; others, after outspending many time in work, retired; third ones, who contributed weighty endowment, changed their residence for other towns. Our personnel had known nothing about them. *It was necessary to find a civilized solution of the problem of appreciation of people’s contributions into the town’s musical life.*

III. MUSEUM AS A BASE OF HISTORICAL JUSTICE

I proposed establishing a town’s museum of musical culture on a voluntary basis with arranging of its exposition in both our quite spacious entrance hall of the music high school and foyer of our large concert hall. The team boosted this proposal enthusiastically. For a direct participation in the museum establishment, as an expert, there was invited Yu.G. Pisarenko. He accomplished this errand with his intrinsic particularity. Leaping ahead, it is necessary to note that today the exposition of the musical culture museum reflecting its rich history is one of the town’s sightseeing attractions. Instead of endless discussions on a role of these or those musicians, by museum-based means, we succeeded in a reconstruction of the objective picture of musical culture

development in the industrial town. In order to build up new things, one have to find meanings of the past experience and – even in general outline – to get sight of future. With the restoration of historical facts, the work got going much easier. Among the other factors (for example, the museum pulled people together, taught many to another relation to themselves, helped ridding of acculturized stable patterns), its exposition reflected activities of decent musicians worked in the town in a truthful manner. And that’s what was surprisingly good: one day, I invited S.G. Eidinova to the music high school and he agreed willingly. After surveying of the museum exposition, he shook my hand with gratitude. He liked the museum. This way, our reconciliation took place.

In January 1983, S.G. Eidinov went out with his chapel choir on a concert tour to Baltics and died there because of a heart seizure just on a stage. He went away from the life, the excellent musician and non-ordinary person, interesting, charismatic and gifted in so many ways. He made much for several generations of the town’s musicians: he inculcated love to music, taught how to work with a public, brought up a culture of communication with each other – For many and for me personally, he was *Teacher* in the high meaning of the word. His departure from the life was really symbolic: this way real musicians get away. Nevertheless, all what happened generated not few questions, too. What his tragic end was caused by? What happened in his interrelations with people? What were real causes of the burst-out crisis? From positions of nowadays, it appears that, it is proper to say: such a tragic outcome was predestined by both objective and subjective circumstances.

On one hand, never authorities see it necessary to be ceremonious with people, who had seen out their due services and got a burden. For authorities they are spent materials; so for overthrowing of such a figure from his pedestal, every method is used, from spreading discreditable rumors to cruel decisions that are able to lead to a person’s death.

On the other hand, apparently, *S.G. Eidinov, got late with a decision making about his departure from the music high school. A chief and all the more a musician should understand, how important is timely departure from a scene. As is known, even negligible retardation on it causes nothing except for an ironical relation of a public. Besides, neither he nor his close environs could propose decent decisions to the music high school team on overcoming the long-drawn and continually aggravating managerial crisis.*

There existed one more factor never having been widely discussed. The events took place *on the background of the brewing in the country crisis of the secondary musical education. The absence of demand in the graduates, musician’s profession prestige fall, as wisecrackers joked sarcastically in those days, coupled with a very middle level of education, prospects non-clarity — all this frightened both students and teachers.*

IV. CONCLUSION

The above listed belongs to conceptual factors, which can be characteristic for activities of any similar institution. With purposes of the picture restoration, we shall try to fix cause-effect relations according to stages of the crisis formation:

–In a hope to ensure for himself a comfort medium, an new manager appoints as his deputy a diligent but much inferior in professional sense person a priory having no prospects to become his potential competitor;

–In his turn, using the similar scheme, the appointed deputy forms a circle of administrators of a middle level from among even less competent specialists, which results in an erosion of credibility to the administration as a whole, causing team’s dissatisfaction;

–With purposes of an “order establishment”, a manager’s deputy starts using the lever of working discipline tightening as a tool of quelling resistance of those unsatisfied and ensuring of overall obedience.

As a result, quite predictable subsequences occur:

–A criterion of professionalism in the work is moved away on a periphery of team interests;

–In the institution, a situation is built up of worshipping of soi-disant influencers, while true values are profaned;

–In the institution, microclimate is worsening; in general, its work quality falls down;

–Professional shortages of the deputy and his managerial mistakes destabilize a working process and become a factor of formation of a mass disobedience;

–The collective discontent is focused on the first manager’s personality.

As a result, the first manager becomes a *persona non grata* in his own team.

V. POSSIBLE METHODS OF CRISIS OVERCOMING

In a prompt manner, one should:

–eliminate decisively errors of managerial decisions and develop objective criteria of specialist’s professional qualities evaluation;

–perform replacing of those managers, who irritate specialists by their incompetence;

–propose a balanced program of institution (company) development for realistically predictable period of time.

Attention! First of all, a would-to-be-appointed administrator or manager must be a “prof” in his area, which, in particular, is exclusively important for any creative sphere. The practice shows: what ever strong in financial or organizing-business-related sense was a manager, in a creative team, he would not be held in respect, if he is not a competent specialist in the area, where he serves at.

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