

THE EMPLOYEES BOARD - UNION RELATIONSHIP (PSHYCO-SOCIOLOGICAL STUDY IN THE JIU VALLEY)

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ABSTRACT: *The study points out the evolution of the most relevant post revolutionary aspects of the Romanian mining problems, by using examples in the Jiu Valley, the most important coal basin in our country, and it is characterized by novelty elements in the field of the relations between the Employees Board and the Union in the mining activity both from the point of view of revealing reality and of presenting the results of the social investigations carried out.*

KEY WORDS: *mining, union, reorganization, disintegration, documentary analysis, observation, sociological investigation*

The study “The Employees Board-Union Relationship” proposed itself through its six chapters to point out in evolution the most relevant post revolutionary aspects of the Romanian mining problems, illustrating, by examples, the Jiu Valley, the most important coal basin of our country.

Reporting to the inner and international history and legislation in the field, the thesis of master’s degree developed the following aspects:

- The social size of the union organization;
- The diversity of mining problems in the Jiu Valley;
- The union activity and its reflection in legislation;
- Realities and desires in the relations between the Employees Board and the Unions;
- The social implications on the background of the reorganization of the mining activity in the Jiu Valley, and at the end of the thesis to present the Suggestions and the Solutions.

The study is characterized by the novelty elements in the field of the relations Employees Board - Union in the mining activity from the point of view of pointing out the reality as well as the results of the social researches of the carried our investigations.

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The first chapter of the study introduce us in the pre- and post revolutionary, inner and international union theme under legislative and evolutionary historical aspect making so the introduction to deeply present the union organization in the Jiu Valley after 1989 and to point out the relation Employees Border - Union on the background of the necessity of the mining enterprises reorganization.

The professional organization of the workers in Romania didn't pass through long stages, which are specific to the guilds or trade unions of some European countries. Since the inter-war period the rhythm of making up the organizations fluctuated depending on the economic conditions of the unions and the offensive of the employers. During the inter-war period the unions will be marked by divisions, like the appearance of "the yellow" unions, yet succeeding in obtaining, by strikes, some economic rights. Under the legislative aspect the inter-war period was marked by a rich legislation, which settled the labour relations and the rights of the unions. After 1945, during many decades, the unions existed only formally in enterprises.

The disintegration of the old state structures after December 1989 created a large field for the action of the unions. If the reappearance of the unions coincided with their breaking up (in June 1990 over 1000 unions acted at the national level), at present, due to the union of the trade unions movement, there are some strong union federations: The National Confederation of the Unions from Romania, The Union Confederation "Cartel Alfa", The Independent Union Confederation "Brotherhood", The National Union Block, The "CERES" Confederation, The Unlined Union Confederation from Romania, The Mining Union Confederation from Romania, to which the Mining Union League from the Jiu Valley is affiliated.

The two leading and deciding centres of the Jiu Valley mining, Administration Border - Union, were marked by the latent rhythm of the achievement of the coal mining reorganization, Romania being among the latest states in Europe in this sense. On the background of the mistaken understanding of the property and democracy as the expression only of the rights but not as well as of the obligations, it has started a deep crisis of the authority of the leaders in enterprises. In this sense, a chapter of the study deliberates upon the problems concerning the labour conflicts and upon the way of their settlement in the inner and international field as well as upon the labour contracts theme due to which provisions the unions won rights for limited periods, especially as far as the rights regarding salaries and other personnel rights are concerned.

Under these imperatives there were taken place the researches "The social implications in the case of decreasing the mining activity in the Jiu Valley" and "The social protection at the Autonomous Pit Coal Administration", both of them carried out on the basis of a contract concluded with the Autonomous Pit Coal Administration from Romania.

In the research "The social implications in the case of decreasing the mining activity in the Jiu Valley" the used methodology had a complex character in the sense that it had joined more techniques of getting the information: the documentary analysis, the observation, the sociological investigation, the sociological interview.

The area of the investigation referred to 11 mining enterprises belonging to the Autonomous Pit Coal Administration, those which were pre-eminently on

“production”, meaning the enterprises from Lonea, Petrla, Dalja, Livezeni, Aninoasa, Vulcan, Paroseni, Lupeni, Barbateni, Uricani and Brazi Valley.

The content, depending on the kind of the personnel, was:

- leadership - the lot included 49 leaders;
- union leaders - the lot totalized 125 union leaders ;
- employees - the most numerous lot in the research and it supposed the division in samples. It was fixed a volume of 2% out of the whole potential population (over 25000 employees), which led to a figure of the division in samples of 521 subjects.

As a scheme of samples it was made the choice for that “on shares” which, although it was not an optional one, was the only one that could be used under the conditions of the concrete restrictions.

The instruments of the investigation were represented, mainly, by the questionnaires of investigation and protocols of interview for the three inquiries. For the lot of the employees it was used the interview, for the lot of the union leaders it was made, in majority, an investigation and some interviews either, and for leadership it was appealed exclusively to investigation. It had in view the establishment of the opinions of three different lots of subjects concerning the same problems.

The three questionnaires contained 14 or 15 questions of opinion and 4 questions concerning socio-professional characteristics of the individual. Out of those 14 or 15 questions of opinion, 10 were completely identically in the questionnaires, which represented a percentage of over 70%. From the point of view of the criterion of the way of formulating the questions there were used both those closed (with limited answers in number and specified alternatives) and the opened codificated questions.

The contingency of decreasing the activity at the mining enterprises focused the interest in this research representing the key problem of the undertaken investigation.

At the end of the analyses there were ascertained the followings:

- at the level of the mass of employees, the fear of inflation (41.48%) is over three times higher than the fear of the decrease of the activity;
- for the union leaders the understanding of the danger of decreasing the activity is with almost 20% higher to the opinion of the mass of employees but still secondary to the inflation, which stands in the top of the hierarchy of dangers;
- only in the case of the leadership the decrease of the activity is considered the highest danger at the highest percentage (43%).

The so far commentary refers to the awareness of the danger of decreasing the activity in the situations when it was not made a direct reference to it but it was “penetrated” in a larger list of diverse, potential dangers.

The question: “Supposing that it will appear the necessity of decreasing the activity in your enterprise or in the other mines of the Jiu Valley, in what degree this thing will affect you?” was put only to the category called by us “employees” which is the most numerous (521 persons) and out of which 90% are workers or foremen. It has been ascertained that the decrease of the activity in the personal enterprise would affect deeply over 76% out of the subjects, but only 50% out of them would be affected in the same way if the decrease refers to other mines.

Changing the place of the opinions to indifference or lack of opinion is normal in the case of “the others” in comparison with that “personal”, so we shouldn’t be surprised by a percentage of 20% referring to the alternative of the lack of opinion. Anyhow, the worry is higher in the places where the mining activity has an overwhelming percentage: Lonea, Uricani, Petrila, Aninoasa a.s.o.

The matter of the causes of the economic situation - and implicit of the eventual necessities for decreasing the mining activity - is extremely important. By the knowledge, as much as precisely of these causes, depends the identification of the solutions for counteracting the damaged situation. That’s why a question referring to these causes was opened, precodificated put. There was allowed the selection of three more causes out of 9 possible alternatives. By maximum concord the main cause is considered to be the insufficiency of the investments, this one being the only situation when all the three categories of subjects placed the cause on the same top. After this first cause the consens does not take place referring to the other eight alternatives, there are even seven situations when the employees and the leadership have so different opinions that the same factors take place at distance of 3-8 levels in the hierarchy.

On the second place in the hierarchy it is placed the insufficiency of the subsidies.

The weak organization and leadership are the third in the whole hierarchical of the specific causes, but this hierarchical place comes from very different positioning referring to the categories of personnel: the third place for the employees, the sixth place for the union leaders and only the eighth for the managers. It is one of the typical causes when endorsed categories of personnel accuse (the employees) and those endorsed (the leadership) contest or minimalized.

The general conclusion about the specific causes of the present state of the Jiu Valley mining is that in their entire majority they are claimed in different ways by the three categories of the subjects who enunciate them depending on their specific interest.

As the pleaded causes determine to a great extent even the way on which their counteracting is seen, we should expect at pronounced differences concerning even the solutions for struggling against the danger of decreasing the activity.

So the re-qualification for changing the job is taken into account by over a half out of the employees (51%), by the union leaders in a percentage of 41% and by the managers in a percentage of 20%.

The retirees in favourable conditions as solutions, gets a percentage of 56% referring to the union leaders, 38% to the employees and only 14% to the managers.

The acceptance of retirees after 20 labour years wouldn’t be a problem for 30-50% out of these in cause because referring to age, 47% out of them overtook 20 years of labour.

The solutions foreseen by the managers were quantificated as follows:

- the modification of the labour schedule 57.14%
- the production technology up-dating 42.85%
- the reorganization of the organized structures 34.69%

The feature of this hierarchy is the idea that the diminishing of the danger of the mining activity decrease should rely on its inner changes, on the improvement of the gained performance.

Among other possible solutions we keep in mind that one concerning the incomplete labour schedule. This is a solution at which other enterprises from other branches of activity appeal but all the subjects refuse it in mining.

The research "Social protection at the Autonomous Pit Coal Administration-Jiu Valley" should be a theoretical and applicable inquire for concrete research. Due to the structure of the sample of subjects (employees, union leaders, managers) and the followed objects, the inquiry from 1997 partially took again aspects from the inquiry made in 1994, which had as a subject the implications of the possible decrease of the activity. As a matter of fact four questions from the questionnaire that refer to the situation of life and mining in the Jiu Valley as a whole were almost identically in the two researches. The conclusions of the two studies show the followings: if in 1994 the majority of the subjects ascertained the worsening of the mining situation, in 1997 these findings got worse with 18-22%. If in 1994 life was considered worse by 52% out of the subjects, in three years the percentage increased at 68% and the opinion of those who considered living better decreased from 24% to 9%.

In order to achieve a comparison between the opinion at the national level and that one from the Jiu Valley on this matter, we referred to the I.M.A.S.' and I.C.C.U.'s soundings from the public opinions barometer. If in 1994 at the national level approximately 66% out of the subjects are not satisfied by the way of living, in 1997 the percentage decreases at 56%. Although both at the national level and in the Jiu Valley over 50% out of the subjects are not satisfied by the way of living still there is a discrepancy concerning the evolution of dissatisfaction.

So, while at the national level the dissatisfaction, even insignificant (9%) decreases for the period 1994-1997, in the Jiu Valley, in the same period, the dissatisfaction increases (6%). Among the causes of this discrepancy we consider to be more pointed out the arrest of the miners' leader from the Jiu Valley, the danger of decreasing the mining activity and especially, a lack of a programme for social sustain in the reorganization of the mining sector. Among the factors that influence mining and life the Government is classified on the first place. The responsibility, starting with the Government, concerning the mining situation, which got worse year after year, is in a way an implicit accusation referring to the way this one acted. In fact, even the information from The Public Opinion Barometer shows a disadvantageous opinion about the Government.

The reorganization of the Romanian mining can be done only by a large social acceptance. The research "The social protection at the Autonomous Pit Coal Administration-Jiu Valley" tried to include the aspect of the social acceptance too.

For the subjects the fear of unemployment is classified on top (31.96%) followed by the mining reorganization (26.02%). The estimation that the loss of the job is the most dangerous phenomenon becomes more evidently if we logically suppose that the mining reorganization and the decrease of the mining activity (10.41%) include the diminishing of the staff too.

Referring to the matter of the possibility and necessity of the reorganization, after the analysis there appear three situations:

- the situation when the reorganization is considered required and possible in mining in the same way as in the whole industry (10.77%);
- the second situation when the reorganization is considered required and possible but with specific contents (44.78%);
- the third situation when the reorganization is not required and possible.

The worry and the resistance against reorganization (the positions 2 and 3 - 86.66%) consist of the lack or inconsistency of some governmental programmes or of other institutions too referring to reorganization.

Among the solutions for achieving the reorganization it comes out as a first option (30.08%) the privatization with the help of the foreign sustain.

The option for closing the less advantageous mines (17.90%) situated on the second place, we believe that the subjects' opinion starts from the supposition that there are two, maximum three disadvantageous mines and from the belief in the redistribution of the available staff at the other mines, belief that has as a support the percentage of only 3.30% belonging to those who accept as a solution the decrease of the staff at all the Jiu Valley mines.

The reorganization of the mining supposes the closing of the disadvantageous mines and the decrease of the number of employees at the active mines. To do that it is required the utilization of a complex of financial and social instruments in order to allow the achievement of a process in a way accepted by the society, without social tensions.

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