I. Lemnij

PROGRESUL TEHNIC ŞI DEZVOLTAREA ECONOMICĂ

(Technical Progress and Economic Development)

Editura Academiei R. S. România, Bucureşti, 1970

The book bearing the signature of I. Lemnij, which was recently issued in the collection "Biblioteca Oeconomica", is a result of his long time studies and investigations in the field of technical progress.

The book starts with the definitions of some basic concepts and with the sound remark that for a long time technical progress has been neglected in economic theories. It then continues with an analysis of the main factors which originate the economic growth (technical progress and accumulation), of the constituent parts making up the system of technical progress. Furthermore, the author analyzes and discusses the effects and the socio-historical character of technical progress, the generating system as well as the place held and the part played by technical progress in doing away with the gap existing between developed and underdeveloped countries.

After reading this 200-page book, I am urged to begin with some short remarks. Thus, it is worth pointing out the fact that this is the first more comprehensive original work on this subject, written in our country. The author avoids an exhaustive survey of the subject, by omitting those generally accepted or theoretically explained aspects and by concentrating on curent problems which, although difficult to solve, nevertheless originate from actual practice; he furthermore deals with some highly debated questions found in the literature on the subject; he avails himself of this opportunity in order to tear down with energy and courage several clichés and to adroitly motivate very convincingly the removal of obsolete theses and practices, prejudicial not only to the development of thought, but also to the growth of economic life itself. Another feature of this book is its rich reference section, as well as its refined style designed to enhance a content which is rich in ideas. Owing to all these attributes, this work is one of the best books edited not only in Romania but also in world literature.

Some of the most interesting and actual problems for the economic theory and practice referring to technical progress are tackled from a non-conforming, militant and creative standpoint. In this connection I point out the approach of such problems as the accumulation and technical problems, the critical review of the overall consideration of the priority development of sector A, (i. e., the manufacturing of means of production) the analysis of the incentive part played by

technical progress under socialism. Moreover, the section referring to the micro-and macro-incentive for sharing a joint interest in the technical progress as well as the sections regarding the role and organization of scientific research are original and highly interesting. The emphasis laid upon the random character of scientific discovery and technical progress is opportune, as well as the pointing out of the fact that both education and science should be viewed as productive branches, bearing in mind their function in the development of technology and in the overall economic growth.

At the same time, I should further like to mention some parts where, in my opinion, a more resolute stand would have been appropriate, by resorting to analytical elements and to more argumentation. For example, a more thorough analysis of elements or (endogeneous and exogeneous) grounds, contributing to scientific and technical development under socialist conditions, is needed. It is true, the superiority of the socialist system in introducing the technical progress is pointed out throughout this book; there are many instances, however, where this idea is merely stated and not analytically substantiated. While entirely agreeing with the author as to the priority development of sector A, the need is, however, felt for this idea not to be independently developed as such but within the system of national economy, in close connection with the insurance of a dynamic balance for this system.

Although some references to cybernetic processes are to be found in the work, we would have welcomed more systematically formulated concepts referring to cybernetic diagrams, to the feedback system as related to technical progress and to economic development, particularly since the author of the book reviewed here has translated into Romanian the book: "Introduction to Economic Cybernetics" by Oskar Lange.

One more question concerning the introduction of technical progress in developing countries. The author states that an underdeveloped country must acquire the highest available technique. I do not quite share such an absolute tendency in this respect, since it is well-known that the highest level of technique is also very expensive, and in these countries the accumulation fund is restricted. Moreover, I disagree with the thesis according to which the development factors would be free of charge for the underdeveloped countries, while we are perfectly aware of the burden they assume in acquiring licenses, in importing equipment, in training the specialists they need a. s. o.

Obviously, there are still other ideas and statements to be found in this book, which are debatable or cannot meet a general consensus. It is widely known, however, that a work which gives "conclusive" answers to a few questions is not worth so much as that which raises as many problems as possible, in an attempt to find some solutions, since the truth can only be reached through lively debates and exchanges of opinions.

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