Mircea Bulgaru

POPULAȚIE SI DEZVOLTARE ECONOMICĂ

(Population and Economic Development)

Editura Politică, București, 1974

The author approaches the most important and serious contemporary prob'ems related to population and living conditions: demographic explosion and food, natural resources, environment pollution and economic growth, urbanization, educational explosion and technological development, a.s.o. These problems are subject to intense research and, at the same time, are object of extreme solutions, from the alarming-pessimistic opinions of the Club of Rome-and, to a certain extent, of the 30 authors of "A Survival Programme"-up to the careless-optimistic views which tempt any amateur aware of the crash of Malthus' progressions.

Realistic and confident in the advance of science and technique, in the abilities of human genius, the author discusses calmly and objectively the most diverse conclusions, setting each time his views towards other, distinct, opinions. He does not produce absolute reasonings and judgements but, based on rich information and original arguments, brings forward viewpoints open to a dialogue, leaving the reader to draw his own inferences.

The first and foremost characteristic of the book is a differentiated concept and the rejection of gross approaches, so often present in many other similar studies of wordwide fame. Thus, despite the indisputable existence of a world problem involving population and economic development, Mircea Bulgaru resolutely maintains and demonstrates that the essence of the problem is different in every country and, consequently, the solutions can only be dissimilar. For instance, in the underdeveloped and many developing countries the root of the problem is the demographic explosion, which requires an acceleration of economic growth in order to secure employment and modest living standards to an ever growing population, whereas in the developed countries the problem lies in finding solutions to the economic growth and in defining a demographic policy with a view to improve some higher living standards and counterbalance the effects of demographic ageing (a decrease in employment and a lower productivity of older persons).

On the other hand, the author, who is quite familiar both with growth matters and population problems, has achieved an integration of the demographic and economic factors which goes beyond the results obtained through an undialectical extrapolation of present trends.

Thus, he manages to outline the fundamentals of a worldwide model of demo-economic prediction, incomparably more persuasive than the other well-known models.

Most interesting are the author's considerations and conclusions with regard to the so-called investments in human resources as a factor of economic growth and optimization of the relationship between the population's development and the evolution of the living standards. In Mircea Bulgaru's opinion, these investments comprise, beside demographic investment (defined as an aggregate of society and family expenses for upbringing, educating and supporting the population under 14 years of age), also investments in labour resources (meant for professional formation) and investments for the recovery of human resources. Human investments which in our time, under the spur of the present technical and scientific advances, as well as of the educational explosion, are growing exponentially, are, however, below the value created by men throughout their lives; these investments represent the condition of social progress concisely expressed by the author in the formula "each generation produces more than it uses".

Author's conclusions converge towards working out the prerequisites and principles of economic-demographic modelling.

He rightly assumes that it is not possible to work out a demographic optimum without securing an economic optimum, "in other words it is necessary an optimization of economic growth closely related to the optimization of all the types of population movement... A solution to population's problems shall be integrated within the socio-economic development of the respective countries, under industrialization programmes meant to secure a growth of material production, the turning to good account of natural resources and of labour resources". In the relationship population — economy, the latter is decisive. Faithful to this marxist axiom Mircea Bulgaru concludes: "Consequently, the main problem arising in the last analysis in the relationship between population and economy is not, in the first place, the population's growth or the limitation of natural resources but, most of all, the difficulties in promoting technical progress and using science and technology in order to fill up the gaps and achieve a socio-economic development of all countries, particularly of the developing countries". This is a realistic and substantiated reply to "the limits of growth".

In the second part of his book, the author dwells on problems of population and economic development in Romania. His approach to and considerations on the changes in demo-economic structures, the evolution of population's degree of employment, the development and future structures of labour resources, the population's consumption and migration, as well as the demo-economic model of our country are noteworthy.

Rich in information, ideas and conclusions, this well-written book has secured a place in every economist's library.

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