

HUMAN CONDITION UNDER THE IMPACT OF GLOBALISATION

Constantin VLAD¹

Rezumat: *Aspectele economice ale condiției umane în lumea contemporană sunt caracterizate de asimetrii imense, de mari și grave discrepanțe. Cauzele acestor asimetrii și discrepanțe se pot găsi în colonialism, precum și în dominanța doctrinei și politicilor neo-liberale în economia mondială, comerț și finanțe din ultimele câteva decenii. Este deja limpede că criza economică și financiară globală va accentua discrepanța dintre părțile puternic dezvoltate și cele subdezvoltate din lume, cu consecințe directe asupra condiției umane.*

Abstract: *The economic aspects of the human condition in the contemporary world are characterized by huge asymmetries, by deep and grave discrepancies. The causes of those asymmetries and discrepancies can be found in colonialism as well as in dominance of the neo-liberal doctrine and policies in the world economy, trade and finances over the last few decades. It is already clear that the current world-wide economic and financial crisis will deepen the gap between high developed and underdeveloped parts of the world, with direct consequences on the human condition*

Keywords: human condition, national framework, economic condition, level of Gross Domestic Product, colonialism, neoliberal doctrine

1. The Human condition is a concept which covers a divers and complex reality. The Man is how he exists by what he does, by what he possesses, by what he received due to education and culture, by what he brings in the relationship with his fellow men. These lines do not want to be a formal definition of the set phrase “the human condition”. They express only the intention to draw the attention to some sides and aspects of the realities taken into consideration by that set phrase.

1.2. The main framework which determines the human condition in the case of individual as well as of the most communities to which the individual belongs are national framework. That national framework means the natural conditions, the level of economic development, the social, politic and cultural environment, the juridical rules, the religion – both as believe and institution – the moral climate – briefly, the conditions crystallized in and through civilization.

1.2.1. But that national framework do not exists in isolation, virtually never in the history. The interdependence between national and international, between domestic and exterior in the condition of the individual as well as of the human communities increased constantly over the modern and contemporary history. Today, under impact of globalization, the domestic, national conditions are

¹Professor, Ph.D., Founding, Full Member of the Academy of Romanian Scientists

becoming increasingly dependent on the exterior, international ones. In that sense, the present paper has intention to put in relief the economic aspects of the condition of the contemporary man.

2. The economic condition of that man is characterized by huge asymmetries, by deep and grave discrepancies.

2.1. I will demonstrate the truth of this affirmation using the most recent data of the World Bank, which means the statistics appreciated by specialists as the most accurate in the field. Thus¹, in 2007 the World GNI totalled 52,621 billion of US dollars. From that global sum, 748.8 bn \$ (1.2%) was produced in the low income countries, 12,234.7 bn \$ (23.3 %) – in the middle income countries, and 39,682.1 bn \$ (75.4 %) – in the high income countries. If we consider the low income and the middle income countries together, the above figures and percents are becoming the following: in 2007, the mentioned countries produced a Gross National Income of 12,985.9 billion US dollars (25 % from total).

2.2. These figures and percentages tell, by themselves, something essential about the economic condition of men of our times. But their deeper significance appears only we connect them to the magnitude of the population living in those three categories of countries. Thus, in the low income countries are living 1.296 billions of people (19.6 % from population of the World), in the average income countries – 4.260 billion of people (64.5 %), and in the high income countries – 1.055 bn of people (16 %). In other words, 19.6 per cents of the World population produced and benefited of 1.2 % from the value of goods and services created and consumed on the global scale, 64.5 per cents – 23.2 %, and 16 per cents from the same population – 75 % from the World GNI.

2.3. Such data should be completed by information concerning the level of Gross Domestic Product (GDP) per capita. In order to simplify the explanation, I will not reproduce the figures about the above mentioned categories of countries in nominal value, but in dollars calculated according to local (national) purchasing power (*Power Purchasing Parities* – PPP). By this way, the figures referring to GDP per capita show as following: 1,494 \$ in the low income countries, 5,952 \$ in the middle income countries and 36,100 \$ in the high income countries.

2.3.1. But, even in this case, the genuine dimensions of the discrepancies among a lot of countries are revealed by figures concerning the least developed countries, on the one hand, and those concerning the most developed countries. In concrete terms, in the case of 23 low developed countries the nominal GDP was in 2007 less than 500 \$ per capita. As the opposite side, in the case of 19 high developed countries the nominal GDP was in the same year more than 30,000 \$. Such huge

¹World Development Report 2009. Table 1, key indicators of development, pp.352-353

differences are becoming an authentic abyss in the case of a not at all negligible number of countries. I mention in this respect that 8 from the least developed countries had in 2007 a GDP smaller than 300 \$ per capita, some of them being situated even under that level (for example, Eritrea – 230 \$, Ethiopia – 220 \$, Liberia – 150 \$, Democratic Republic of Congo – 140 \$, Burundi – 110 \$. On the other hand, 11 countries from the group of high developed countries reached levels of per capita income which exceeds 40,000 \$, 3 of them even more than 50,000 \$: Denmark – 54,910 \$, Switzerland – 59,880 \$ and Norway – 76,450 \$.

2.3.2. A few additional data put in the light some other aspects of the above mentioned disparities. Thus¹, in 2006 more than 20% of the population of 72 countries lived under limit of poverty, in the case of 25 countries that percentage being even higher, namely more than 50%. A sad record in this regard belongs to Zambia – 72.9% of population “living” under limit of poverty, Madagascar – 73.3%, and Sierra Leone – 82.8%. The same source indicates that, in the case of 16 countries, the percentage of population subsisting with less than one dollar/daily reach 40%; 7 from those countries rise that percentage above 60% from the inhabitants: Rwanda – 60.3%, Niger – 60.6%, Madagascar – 61.0%, Zambia – 63.8%, Central African Republic – 66.6%, Nigeria – 70.8%

2.3.3. Behind of those figures and percentages are concrete realities: the condition of living, of work, the level of income, the conditions of habitation, of education, of health care, the degree of assurance with the public services – water, sewerage, heating, transportation, the condition of woman, of child and so on, and so forth. How all these things show in different categories of countries is well known. It is a secret for nobody the world of contemporary man is, in the case of billions of human beings, a world of awful contrasts, a world of extreme opulence, on the one hand, and of the extreme poverty, on the other hand. And, there are no signals that such extremes would tend to diminish; by the contrary, under some aspects those extremes tend to deepen.

3. Somebody can discuss about causes of the grave disparities inherent to human condition contemporary to us. Without doubt, among them was the colonialism, which created rich metropolis and poor colonies, changed the course toward underdevelopment of many countries which in the past belonged to some flourishing civilizations – for example, China and the Arab world. Also, without doubt, among those causes is the neo-liberal doctrine and policies inspired by it in the present capitalism. Over last few decades, that doctrine dominated the global economy, trade, finances, the international institutions in these fields, deepening up to alarming proportions the disparities among developed world and underdeveloped world.

¹World Development Report 2008. Table 2, Poverty, pp. 336-337

3.1. It is well known that many specialists consider neo-liberal doctrine and policies a direct cause of the current worldwide economic and financial crisis. Of course, we have to appreciate the fact that the whole international community is preoccupied to surpass the crisis, that institutions like the International Monetary Fund, the World Bank, as well as different groups of states, among them the European Union, mobilize important resources in order to assist the poor countries and some of the emergent economies to face out the difficulties provoked by crisis. But it is already clear that one of the effects of the crisis will be the deepening of the gap between the developed and developing parts of the Planet, more properly speaking: the gap between the rich world and the poor world. Of course the developed countries have and will have their loses. But will those loses undermine their dominant position in the world economy. Certainly not. Maybe, the crisis will deepen the difficulties facing the underdeveloped countries. Look how, one by one, the low and middle income countries take credits of tens of billions of Dollars or Euro, which will burden their economies for many years, even for decades.

3.2. In a quite pertinent essay, recently published¹, a well known Romanian writer made a plea, certainly without any chance to be taken into consideration, in favor of a hypothetical Memorial of the victims of capitalism, sustaining that the human sufferings cannot be quantified by classification. He was right, but only in general terms. Because, it is true, the crisis is painful for a Russian multibillionaire, who “beggared” because of it with 70% from his fortune. But, can be compared his “pain” with the suffering of a man of 40-50 years old who lost his job and has very few chances to find a new one until the end of his active life? Because it is true that the children of the multimillionaires in dollars or in Euro can suffer due to the fact that their parents will not fulfil all their caprices. But can be such sufferings compared with those of children from hundreds of millions of families with a level of life even more diminished by crisis, who perish by starvation and by endemic diseases? Some very important documents of the United Nations² show that, in millions of cases, one additional dollar spent can save the life of a child from the underdeveloped world. One dollar for the life of a human being, that is to say of the being who represents the highest stage of the existence known by us, no matter how we see the human being – as the creation of Divinity or the result of the evolution of nature.

In conclusion, there are human sufferings and sufferings. As for the discrepancies existing in condition of contemporary man, they have as moral equivalent huge, scandalous injustices.

¹Tudor Octavian, *Memorialul victimelor capitalismului*, Jurnalul Național, 21 aprilie 2009.

²United Nations General Assembly, A/59/2005, *A larger freedom, Report of the Secretary-General*, p. 7.