

Dan Popescu - Amenințări în secolul XXI
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Ph.D. Professor Dan Popescu's book continues as the author himself considers, the line of his with previous work („Economia ca spațiu deschis. În ochiul ciclonului”, 2002; „O lume agitată”, 2003; „Jurnalul economic”, 2007; „Cataclisme economice care zguduie lumea”, 2010; „Amurgul lumilor paralele”, 2011 și „Criza indecentă”, 2012”)

The book is a lucid radiography of the socio-economic reality of today supported by historical insights.

Since the Introduction the author is warning: "I am not issuing any certitudes ... but I am examining, I am suggesting, I am proving I am looking for meanings and significances show, look for meanings and from the height of about two thousand years of civilization and human development on five continents ..." (p.9).

The book has four parts which reinforce the theme: Part I - Tough times; Part II - The Siege on poverty and humility. Sequences in black and white; Part III - The Serious Problem of Employment: "We live working or we die fighting"; Part IV - Books, newspapers, personalities, teachers, friends.

The book gathers together articles published by the author in 2013 and 2014 and assembles them into a fine puzzle.

Professor Dan Popescu's writings are a part of a trend that combines postmodern literary text with relevant scientific data facilitating understanding and analysis. This approach follows the line of a remarkable American author, David Brooks (The Social Animal) but I would even say that Dan Popescu published work has precedence in this manner of writing.

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Part I "Tough times" is an analysis of the changes that took place in Romanian society after 1989, the author focusing on the major issues that affected the dynamics in Romania (industry, agriculture, infrastructure, privatization, education, health, finances, living standards).

The rough analysis on how the transition to capitalist society took place is supported by numerous examples. From the beginning, the author considers that the destruction of the Romanian economy was the result of "ignorance, corruption, theft ... often replacing plants with discos, restaurants and luxury apartment complexes" (p.10). Agriculture was "broken, with the irrigation system, dismantled, destroyed, stolen piece by piece, becoming just for <subsistence>, we now importing about 80% of subsistence needs" (p.11). The author continues by showing that infrastructure was a privileged field to have achieved "huge amounts of money as a result of bid rigging" (p.11). He does not hesitate to name "crooks" those persons who have robbed the country's economy, gaining huge fortunes "villas, houses, palaces, the latest fashion cars, great parties, indecent luxury, fancy holidays" (p.11).

Dan Popescu approaches a neuralgic issue: the cuts in salaries and pensions, the emergence of the political clientele increased the economical and political crisis and deepened the drama of everyday life. Along other experts Professor Dan Popescu believes that the period between 1990 and 2000, when the countries from Central and Eastern Europe with centralized economy transitioned to a free market economy had four stages: "a) liberalization of prices and activities for the companies still owned by the State ; b) privatization process, in a diverse market that included the emerging companies private –owned from the beginning ; c) establishment of the institutions necessary for a free market economy - banks, stock exchanges, legislation, competitive conditions and so on; d) social protection for the unemployed and marginalized in the new competitive conditions" (p.15).

Privatization was a process described by the author in dark colors, a process that helped to get rich people uninterested to develop the free market in Romania but interested in gaining money easier by "selling assets, machinery, stocks of raw materials, finished goods, finished goods or the land acquired this way" (p.16). Among the institutions of the free market the author focuses on banks. The modus operandi of the banks is revealed, how in their desire to gain they acted beyond prudence, which led to unperformant loans, to customers that lost their guarantees (finding themselves in dramatic

situations), to a vulnerability of the financial market and even to some banks bankruptcy (insolvency).

In Chapter II "Hunger: drastic threat for the XXI century?" Professor Dan Popescu leans on an issue crucial to human survival: food resources. Studies show that although the food supply would be enough for the 7 billion people on Earth, more than a quarter of them do not have access to the bare necessities of food. Researcher Dan Popescu studied this phenomenon for over 35 years and in his travels he encountered different expressions of poverty in South Africa, Syria, Argentina and even the U.S. and Europe.

The author considers that famine is a social phenomenon and agrees with Nobel Price laureate (1998) Amartya Sen, that this is more a matter of social sciences than natural sciences, in other words, as Dan Popescu emphasizes, is a problem of and social allocation and management. The answer to the question whether hunger is a serious threat in the XXI century is an affirmative one. "Synthesizing more than a thousand years of persistence - says the author - and its accentuation in the recent decades, in the content of its proliferation in some places, of brilliant civilizations, the complexity of the phenomenon itself proves that <Yes> ..." (p.24).

The author continues by listing a number of scientific papers on the subject, he had consulted (in Romanian, English, French) list that constitutes a veritable bibliography of authors of reference (Josue de Castro, E. Bonnefous, Cornelius Walford, Radu Rosetti, C. Dobrogeanu Gera, C. Levi-Strauss, Marx, Edgar Morin, EP Prentice, Alfred Sauvy, Dan Popescu).

The author takes a trip in the history of famine. Starting in the early Middle Ages in Europe, significant economic processes related to productivity in agriculture, agrarian and social reforms, economic and social policies, agricultural markets, imports and exports, wars and famine, climate changes are described. The analyzes are updated and the author observes that famine is not caused by the lack of food but by the inability of individuals and human groups to acquire it. To this they are added – as Dan Popescu find relevant - "... social issues of land ownership but also the air, water, and soil pollution , lack of performance of many lands, excessive and inappropriate use of chemicals, the obvious climate changes, the possible and more frequent floods caused by melting glaciers and so on" (p.36).

The author highlights the significance of the paradigm shift in agriculture, based on changing food patterns, diversification of food resources, new technologies.

In the last part of this chapter the author focuses on Romania and with the help of some top Romanian researchers (Ion Claudiu, Dimitrie Gusti), reveals Romanian agriculture, rural poverty and the significance of peasant uprisings from various time periods (1437, 1784, 1907).

The case studies presented are proving the exceptional documentation the researcher's interest on and Romanian reality.

Rigorous economic analyzes are completed by the cultural personality Dan Popescu with reverberations that hard Romanian rural life had in the consciousness of writers and plastic artists (I.L. Caragiale, O. Bancila, N. Tonitza).

In the third chapter the author focuses on financial markets and describes and analyzes in details the work of Alan Greenspan "Memoirs" (2007), which advocates the need for deregulation of financial markets and performs a radiography of their "turbulences". The "creative destruction", Greenspan's concept refers to the functional role of economical crisis. Professor Dan Popescu, critically notices that markets self-regulation is not an easy task given the imbalances created that lead to a wide gap between rich and poor. The new information technologies used in the financial markets lead - says the American banker - to higher rates of return, but also to the occurrence of concomitant risks. Dan Popescu does not think that finances are ruling but that actually "production, backed by finances that are fueling it, led and will lead the world" (p. 69).

In the next chapter the author reflects on a doctoral thesis he conducted and addresses the crucial issue of economic equilibrium. JM Keynes model of equilibrium and economical growth is invoked model which has as a purpose to increase the level of employment. Other models are assessed in parallel. The author considers that while we can speak about the relativity of economical equilibrium, we can not build this reality on "deregulation", when we are looking at the EU and U.S. models. The lessons for Romania delivered by the "hole in the shoe specialist" (p. 77) can not be taken seriously.

In Chapter 5, the author wonders about the meanings of the economist profession in our days. Considering the definition of the profession Professor Dan Popescu made an historical excursus on it, focusing on Romanian Economical School of XIXth and XXst centuries. The author does not forget to review the list of brilliant economists from interwar and postwar period. Finally, the author asks what are the perspectives for the Romanian

economists. And he says "The Romanian economists destiny can hardly be separated from that of the economists in the world. The world of today is a world that is <more and more economical > a world in which everything – practically everything - is examined in scarcity circumstances: natural resources, financial and human resources, spirituality, health and stamina resources, resources for innovation and inventiveness etc. From such complex angles the economist destiny in the world shows itself both with restrictions and possibilities " (p.112).

In "Medieval structures - privileged and <miserable >?" Dan Popescu demolish the period after 1989 when the entropic behavior of individuals, groups, institutions and society as a whole, proves to be difficult to decipher, and from this perspective the author speaks of "controversial times". The history of this period is not studied enough now, when "speculation became almost everything and production is nothing" (p. 119). A period in which almost 80% of privatization failed, and discrepancies between individuals increased dramatically. An analyses of the salary and pension system shows unimaginable inequalities. And the researcher Dan Popescu points out these inequalities: salaries and pensions in the legal field are beyond the possibilities of the country. "I'll never understand - says the author - why a prison director without contribution or with a relative contribution, has a pension that is 10 to 12 times higher than, for example a Medicine Professor with an <absolute> contribution? And so on and so on . Are – and why is this - the magistrates more important than doctors, than teachers and scientists, than men of culture? Maybe, but I honestly do not think so ..." (p. 122). And the list of examples continues with the salaries of senior state officials, with the fraudulently acquired wealth, but also, with the serious underfunding of education, health and other areas.

In chapter VIII "The pursuit of profit and the social: compatible categories" the author agrees with other researchers (D. Cohen, R. Putnam, Maya Beauvallet) that a society can not exist only on the economic dimension, on profit. Thus, after the Second World War, the West has developed the concept of "social market economy" which emphasizes the profit together with other values, especially moral, have boosted the people's optimism. It talks about the "thirty glorious years", which in the West, until 1980 led to an unprecedented development of human society. It occurred then, as Professor Dan Popescu emphasizes "a real market regulation ... allowing ... a social

market economy" (p.132). After 1980, both in Europe and America, inequalities have widened, as well as the market vulnerability.

Chapters 6:10 are referring to the social mobility of the population and migration flows in Central and Eastern Europe, the author noticing that the capital market and the labor market are the first that have globalized in the contemporary economic world.

This first part ends with a chapter dedicated to "Rosia Montana" a project that has sparked much controversy in the Romanian space. Dan Popescu confronts the two sides of the problem: on one hand people from the area with no jobs, but instead with many problems (related to education, health, culture, etc.) and on the other, the Gold Corporation project viewed with suspicion by a large part of population that believes that the technologies used in the project will lead to a strong environmental degradation. The author believes that more specialists should be involved (physicists, chemists, ecologists, biologists, economists, lawyers, sociologists, etc.).

In the second part of the volume Professor Popescu takes a series of trips in the history, revealing numerous economic issues that have a correspondence in the contemporary world economy. Thus, The First World War gives him the opportunity to make some economic analyzes emphasizing on the dramatic of the period.

An interesting chapter is dedicated to Henry Ford. The author, an eminent specialist in economic doctrines, has realized in other works (books) portraits of various personalities that marked the American and world economy: Paul Krugman, Warren Buffett, Joseph Stiglitz, Douglas North, Andrew Carnegie, Cornelius Vanderbilt, etc).

Here H. Ford is presented as a benchmark in the global economy, because of the production of automobiles as well as for the Ford paradigm that replaced the Taylor one in the interwar period.

Professor Dan Popescu analysis are closer to the Annales School of Fernand Braudel and his approach to historical sociology by highlighting contextual issues that determine the socio-economic changes (see chapters *Marile averi: între onestitate, fascinație, revoltă și suspiciuni*"; *„Vara anului 1939. O istorie care se repetă?*" or chapters of part III of *„Secvențe din istoria și actualitatea dictaturilor*"; *„Crepusculul <zeilor> și actualitatea lui*").

The IVth Part of the volume is dedicated as indicated by the title to several books, newspapers, personalities, teachers, and friends. They are

presented some medallions of economists (Avram Rosen, Nicholas Ivanciu Văleanu, Ionita Olteanu and even Napoleon Bonaparte as an economist).

The chapter also presents a series of conferences and communication sessions, national and international, where the author was participant .

The book written by Dan Popescu fascinated by the richness of information that consistently covers major themes of contemporary or past economy. Each chapter has a motto picked by the author in consonance with the analyzed subject.

In the preamble of the book they are presented the volumes written by the author and conferences held abroad, published in many languages throughout the world, which emphasizes the professional and scientific stature of Professor Dan Popescu.

The book was published under outstanding graphic conditions at Continent Publishing House (photos on the covers reflecting the author's European journey) and is intended for students, researchers, teachers and the general public concerned about the economic problems of Romania and the world.