

## **Demographic modernisation and demographic crisis in Russia**

In the early 90s Russia in her demographic evolution arrived at a turning point. The depopulation which took place until this period in the latent form became evident, the natural increase of population became negative. The public opinion was shocked but for the professional demographers it was not something unexpected.

The recent demographic trends in post-soviet Russia have the profound roots in the Russian history of XX century and can be interpreted in the context of the modernisation of Russian society in 20th century. Demographic modernisation is one of important aspects of general modernisation. The rapid destruction of the peasant society from the late 20th as well as mass rural-urban migration resulted in a break with the traditional demographic behaviour and in an accelerated demographic transition. The demographic evolution in Russia was almost the same as in Europe or North America but with a delay and with certain significant special features. In spite of rapid modernisation, demographic behaviour of an important part of the population maintained archaic features and as consequences, the level of fertility and mortality in Russia for a long time was higher, and the population was younger than in the West.

Nevertheless the post-war decades became a period of increased convergence in the demographic evolution in Russia and in the West. It is confirmed by the many parameters of family size and composition, family cycle, nuptiality, divorces, fertility, causes of death structure, emigration-immigration correlation etc. Now I would like to touch upon the problems of the main demographic processes such as fertility, migration and especially mortality.

### **Decline of fertility**

The process of demographic modernisation was accompanied by fundamental changes in people's procreative behaviour. Beginning in the late 1920s, fertility rapidly declined due to the broadening of the scope of procreative choice, on the one hand, and to the difficult, sometimes even catastrophic, social and political conditions of the 1930s and 1940s, on the other. It was not realised in the USSR. One judged on fertility level by general fertility rate: at 1950s owing to young population it was relatively high against the background of many European countries. The Soviet official sources cited this supposedly high fertility as an example of the advantages inherent in socialist society.

Nevertheless the decline in fertility, being a natural consequence of the demographic transition, still persisted. Disoriented public opinion in Soviet Union and in Russia has always tended to attribute such the decline in fertility to the direct influence of the social and economic factors. Now when the fertility level became unprecedentedly low everybody is sure that it is a consequence of the social and economic crisis of the last few years. But it is possible to see the phenomenon of fertility decline by an other way that is in the light of the universal trends of the demographic transition connected to the modernisation of the family and the society and drawing closer one to another the Russian and Western models of the procreative behaviour. During several decades in the middle of the 20th century,

Russia has retraced the path already traversed by the developed countries. Russia did it at an accelerated pace, and in the 1970s has attained the same fertility level as many of the Western countries. In terms of fertility trends and indices, Russia in this period resembled the Western countries of the earlier demographic transition, but twenty years later more closely resembled to the countries of the more recent transition, which seems to be quite natural because the transition in Russia was also rather late.

At the same time, the Russian model of procreative behaviour still differs from the Western one in important features. For example, in contrast to the recent developments in most Western countries, the decrease in TFR in Russia was accompanied by a simultaneous decrease of the age at marriage and at birth. The average age at first marriage decreased, and the average age at birth, after a certain increase in the late 1980s, resumed its decline. The proportion of children born by the women under 18 has increased from 1.8% in 1980 to 2.0% in 1988 and to 4.2% in 1992.

Another important feature concerns birth control methods. In Russia, contrary to most countries already passed through the demographic transition, induced abortion remains one of the main family planning methods. There is usually a limited selection of contraceptives, they are in short supply and, in addition to that, recently became too expensive. According to official figures, the proportion of conceptions ended in abortion (that is the number of abortion per 100 live births) is increasing. In 1993 in Russia more than 3.2 million abortions (235 per 100 live births) were officially registered. The respective figure for the Great Britain is 24. There are no signs of serious changes in the attitude of the population to abortions. According to the results of a poll carried out by the National Centre for Study of Public Opinion (VTsIOM) in April 1994, the distribution of the answers to the question "What would you do in case of unplanned pregnancy?" was the following: "Would keep the baby" - 13%, "Would have an abortion" - 40%, "I don't know" - 47%. The readiness to have an abortion was the same for both urban and rural dwellers. The question appeared to be too embarrassing to 51% of the respondents claiming adherence to the Orthodox religion, and to 71% of religious Muslims (they choose the answer "I don't know").

#### **Decline of fertility, migration trends and slowdown of population growth**

The demographic transition in Russia was not accompanied by the demographic explosion, as it was the case in most countries where the demographic modernisation took place comparatively late. The main reason for that was the high level of mortality, in particularly during the periods of catastrophic mortality increase as consequences of the Revolution, wars and other social cataclysms. But as until the early 1960s the total fertility rate in Russia exceeded 2.5% the natural increase was relatively high (1.7 - 1.8% per year). Just this increase. was the main factor determining the growth of the population over the entire post-war period.

But the decline of fertility has long ago predetermined the cessation of this growth. From the beginning of the 1930s demographic modernisation has accelerated in Russia and 30 years later the country entered a period of hidden depopulation. None of the post-war generations of women in Russia have provided replacement-level fertility. Over all the period from the middle of the 1960s and up to now (excepting 1986-1988) the net reproduction rate in the Russian Federation has

been less than 1. In the early 1990s its decline became sharper. In 1990 it attained the all-time low of 0.821 (the previous minimum value of 0.874 was attained in 1979-1980) and continued to fall to 0.733 in 1992 and to 0.651 in 1993. In 1994 it was 0,653.

As the net reproduction rate was below the replacement level during the several decades the appearance of a negative natural increase was not unexpected. The forecasts made in the early 1980s predicted it though it was supposed to not appear until the beginning of the next century. But even then it was clear that it is possible to prevent a global decrease in the population of Russia only through migration. In those forecasts it was assumed that the migrating population would come from other republics of the USSR.

The effective influence of migration on the total population increase in Russia for a long time was rather insignificant. Beginning from the middle of the 1950s, population increase due to migration was negative but the decrease of the population due to migration was largely compensated by its natural increase. Beginning from the middle of the 1970s the increase due to migration became positive but as a rule never exceeded 25% of the total increase and usually was even smaller. From 1990 this proportion has reversed: the annual population increase due to migration was, by its absolute value, smaller than in the late 1980s but owing to the drop of the natural increase its proportion in the total increase has grown. When (in 1992) the natural increase changed into natural decrease the net migration was not able to make up for it. The total rate of population growth as well as the rate of natural increase became negative, and the population size in Russia started to decline. From the beginning of 1990s the population growth or even preservation of constant population size in Russia is possible only on condition that annual immigration is steady and important. This situation is absolutely new. In the course of the centuries Russia send population beyond the limits of historical Russian territory. Through the centuries centrifugal migration flows were *conditio sine qua non* the colonisation of new regions of Russian and Soviet empire.

This situation being absolutely new for Russia is a result of a long-run and, by and large, normal evolution. But in actual political circumstances the public opinion misapprehend it as a something disastrous. Voices are heard which announce a "demographic crisis", a "demographic catastrophe", a "demographic tragedy", "the extinction of the Russian people" and so on. The negative opinions concerning the changes in demographic and family spheres are exploited by antireformists who consider these changes to be nothing but unfavourable consequences of unneeded or unsuccessful reforms.

### **Mortality crisis.**

In reality the mortality is only demographic process which justifies the image of demographic crisis in Russia. It is well known that the mortality and life expectancy situation here is unfavourable during 3-4 decades and is an evidence of its lag behind the majority of developed countries in the improvement of health and lowering of mortality. One may produce a big list of the factors explaining that lag. But the longer is the list, the clearer is that the separated factors do not explain anything and, moreover, themselves need an explanation which would make it possible to inscribe all trends that are observed into a larger socio-economic context.

In the most general form we can say that the actual population's health and mortality situation in Russia reflects the incompleteness of epidemiological transition in this country. New possibilities created by the modernisation of the economic and social life in the USSR were used for the solution of the main tasks of the earlier stages of this transition. A great role was played by the achievements of medical science, efforts of the public health system which formulated and implemented an effective strategy of prevention and treatment of previously invincible diseases. The main successes in the mortality lowering in Russia due to the drastic restriction of the role of the exogenous causes of death such as infectious and parasitogenic diseases, tuberculosis, diseases caused by starvation and malnutrition, epidemics, infant mortality, etc.

But one should not overestimate the successes in the fight against the exogenous factors of mortality. It requires large funds, peaceful conditions, a generally favourable socio-economic situation in the country. These conditions not always existed in Russia. Therefore, even the tasks of the first stage of epidemiological transition, that is the suppression of exogenous causes of death still remain unsolved.

As compared with other developed countries, the mortality at the child and working ages from avoidable exogenous causes remains rather high. For instance, of every thousand new-born boys, 20-30 times more infants die of infectious and parasitogenic diseases than in other large developed countries. Mortality of respiratory diseases at that age exceeds 20, 30 and sometime more than 50 times the indices of many other countries. No better is the situation with the children of one to five years. As regards the adult population, the difference is not so big, but in this case, too, the situation is so far from being brilliant. Masculine mortality in the age of 30 to 60 years of infectious and parasitogenic diseases is 4-8 times and of respiratory diseases 2-4 times higher than in the largest foreign countries. In a number of cases the total number of dying (per each thousand of new-borns) due to that cause in Russia is not so big; in Great Britain, for instance, the probability of a new-born dying of respiratory diseases in certain years is even greater than in Russia. But of the total number of men dying to the cause, 30 per cent are under 60 in Russia, and only 7 per cent in France and less than 4 per cent in Japan. The excessively high mortality due mainly to exogenous diseases at the child and middle ages explains the substantially lower, as compared with other countries, average age of death of these diseases. All this shows that certain tasks of the epidemiological revolution which are already a thing of the past in many countries, have not yet been finally solved in Russia.

While at the early stages of the epidemiological transition the main tasks were to eliminate or to reduce to the minimum many of the most dangerous diseases of the time, at the advanced stages of the transition this approach loses its rationale. Circulatory diseases or neoplasms cannot be eliminated and the latest successes in controlling mortality in every developed country have been achieved not by the abolition of such endogenous causes but by pushing the deaths from them to more and more advanced age. Unfortunately, these successes have not been shared by Russia. In most developed countries, in the last two decades, the mean age of death from its two main causes (circulatory diseases and neoplasm) increased, in Russia it stagnated or even became lower.

So Russian lag behind the majority of developed countries is regarded from the point of view of the life expectancy has two components. On the one hand, the main tasks of the earlier stages of that revolution have not been carried out in full, and there are still elements of the traditional structure of causes of death, in particular, the infectious, respiratory and digestive diseases mortality is still too high. On the other hand, the tasks emerging in the course of the completion of the epidemiological transition are tackled in an unsatisfactory way, the fight against pathogenic actors, particularly dangerous at the new stage of development, has not been sufficiently active, with the result, as compared with other countries, of earlier mortality of primarily endogenous or quasi-endogenous causes, the cardio-vascular and oncological diseases, in the first place. Which of the above mentioned components inflicts today greater loses? The gap in life expectancy of Russia and countries with the lowest mortality is primarily due to the high premature mortality from circulatory diseases. The second place belongs to accidents and injuries of men and respiratory diseases of women.

### The causes of causes

Two main factors: economical and cultural.

### Growth of the expenditures for the health care in the USSR, in the USA and in France, 1960-1990

Year	Per capita expenditures			Growth		
	USSR, roubles	USA, \$	France, francs	USSR	USA	France
1960	27	143	242	1	1	1
1970	49	346	816	1,8	2,4	3,4
1980	72	1064	3566	2,7	7,4	14,7
1990	124	2601	9521	4,7	18,2	39,3

Sources: *Íàðíáíá ðéçýéñòáí ÑÑÑÐ*, different years; Statistical Abstract of the United States 1994. Washington, 1994, p. 109; *Annuaire rétrospectif de la France. Séries longues. 1948-1988*, p. 190; *Annuaire statistique de la France 1994*, p. 241.

Cultural factors: Traditional passive attitude to the life and to the death of the large marginalised strata of Russian population, low value of a human life.

### Conclusion

If some crisis features are present in the demographic development of Russia, they are likely to be due not to the actual reforms but on the contrary to a delay in implementing of reforms. This delay hampers adaptation of social institutions to the new realities of demographic behavior and engenders the crises. But these realities in themselves are the natural consequences of a contradictory, catching up, Russian/soviet-style modernization.

This modernization constantly created and steel is creating an inner resistance, braking forces but in the end it steadily advances. As this takes place existing problems are solved, but the new ones arise. While the new demographic

realities make their way in Russia, the country faces the same challenges, as most industrial nations (danger of depopulation, population ageing, fragility of the families, etc.). Since it is not possible to avoid them, we need to find adequate answers to these challenges.

	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004
Population (millions)	142.8	142.6	142.4	142.2	142.0
Population aged 65 and over (millions)	22.5	22.6	22.7	22.8	22.9
Population aged 65 and over (% of total)	15.8	15.9	16.0	16.1	16.2
Population aged 0-14 (millions)	17.5	17.4	17.3	17.2	17.1
Population aged 0-14 (% of total)	12.2	12.3	12.4	12.5	12.6
Population aged 15-64 (millions)	102.8	102.6	102.4	102.2	102.0
Population aged 15-64 (% of total)	72.0	71.9	71.8	71.7	71.6

Source: Russian Statistical Agency, "Demographic Statistics of Russia", Moscow, 2005.

Table 1. Demographic indicators of Russia, 2000-2004.

The demographic situation in Russia is characterized by a significant increase in the number of people aged 65 and over, which is a result of the increase in life expectancy and the decrease in the birth rate. At the same time, the number of people aged 0-14 is decreasing, which is a result of the decrease in the birth rate.

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