"WE" AND "OTHERS" ACCORDING TO STATEMENTS OF ECONOMIC EXPERTS IN SERBIA

"Mi" i “drugi” prema iskazima ekonomskih stručnjaka u Srbiji

APSTRAKT Ovim radom se ukazuje na stručne i naučne odnose između naših i zapadnih ekonomskih stručnjaka. Pogledi domaćih ekonomista o drugima i drugosti su stavljeni u kontekst postsocijalističke transformacije na prelazu milenijuma. Najpre se razmatraju gledišta o naučnoj razmeni sa inostranstvom odnosno sa zapadnim stručnjacima i institucijama, ukazuje se na prijatna i neprijatna iznenađenja u toj saradnji i ishodima naučne saradnje na relaciji »mi-drugi«, odnosno o uzajamnom učenju i recepciji saznanja i profesionalnih obrazaca ponašanja. S tim un vezi, pominje se podela naših ekonomista na egalitarne liberale i libertarijance. Na kraju se iznose argumenti intervjuisanih stručnjaka o karakteru privatizacije u Srbiji i njenim dometima.

KLJUČNE REČI mi, drugi, socijalizam, kapitalizam, tranzicija, privatizacija, naučna razmena, naučna strategija, tradicija, modernost, iznenađenje

ABSTRACT This article refers to the scientific and professional relations between Serbian economists and their counterparts from the West. Opinions of Serbian economists about the others and otherness are considered within the context of postsocialist transformation at the turn of millennium. Firstly, the statements about scientific exchange with foreign, i.e. Western professionals and institutions are discussed referring to experienced pleasant and unpleasant surprises as well as to the effects of scientific cooperation in view of “we”-“others” relationship, i.e. mutual learning process and reception of knowledge and professional behaviour types. In relation to that, the differences between egalitarian liberals and libertarians among our economists are pointed out. Finally, arguments of interviewed experts about privatisation in Serbia, its characteristics and effects are presented.

KEY WORDS we, others, socialism, capitalism, transition, privatisation, scientific exchange, scientific strategy, tradition, modernity, surprise
1. Introduction

We are starting from the assumption that "history is not created by ideas alone, since they are also affected by social and economic forces, and the ideas are not only the outcome of workings of those forces either. They, in the first place, create the possibility to act, and then also to induce people into accepting such acts; those are, after all, crucially important acts" (Todorov, 1994: 13). The various types of social power also include expert and information power. Expert power is based on a recipient's notion that the agent possesses superior power and ability, while information power completely depends on the quality of the agent's message, its suggestiveness and logical argumentation (French and Raven, 1960). Expert and information power of some of our economic experts have been intensified by the dual objective of their activities as proponents of the political and professional public, hence their twofold responsibility. Noteworthy in this context is Bourdieu's idea of the "capitals" of different actors in terms of their effective and available resources and power (economic, symbolic, cultural and social capital). The question is whether our economic experts have these "capitals" and how they "convert" them?

This paper primarily, and for the most part, presents and interpretes the views and positions of domestic economic experts about others, due to the qualitative methodology of the project: taped interviews with experts and, to a lesser extent, their texts. On the other hand, however, we are not interested only in the meaning of their statements and texts but also whether they are truthful or not, the more so as it is possible that during the analysis we may have to face the heterostereotypes and autostereotypes of our respondents. The main question this paper focuses on is the following: What are the positions and viewpoints of our respondents, what is their idea of others, and does it include positive or negative heterostereotypes, occidentalism or something else. In addition to the relationship "we" and "others", it also addresses the relationship of "I" and "we" and, within “our side”, also of “we” and “we”.

The attitude of our economic experts towards their colleagues from the West depends on many factors. We shall indicate only some of them. First, it depends on the degree of freedom of scientific thought, i.e. on the possibility of their free communication with the Westerners. Second, it depends on their primary experience, i.e. on whether they were educated in the West or not, and whether they resided in the West for another reason. Third, it depends on their value orientation that, on its part, depends on their socialization of family, school or another kind. Finally, it depends on what is called the personal equation of an expert, including the degree of development of his self-confidence.

Naturally, all this is also under the influence of the general socio-historical context marked by the processes of globalisation and transition, i.e. post-socialist
transformation, as well as our recent social developments, including both the period after the "peaceful revolution" of 5 October 2000 when the regime of Slobodan Milošević had been toppled, and the one after the death of Prime Minister Đinđić, with the "Sword" and "Scalpel" (names given to the operations mounted against organized crime and corruption), and financial affairs at the state level.

A reform is not, nor it should be, a "technical issue, but rather a change in the overall way of life (system of values, thinking, behaviour)" (Stojanović, 2003: 82). Reform, thus understood, requires a considerably longer period of time than thirty or so months. Social reform, in this sense, implies a total or partial break-up with the past, transformation of the tradition, and therefore also changes in the standpoints, views and opinions of most economic experts, as well as preferably the predominant part of other actors including "ordinary" citizens.

In this Introduction, we shall only touch upon the complex issue of relations between the tradition and the elements of the new democratic culture in Serbia.

The delegitimisation of the old regime was, at times, accompanied by a radical negation of not only political and economic but also cultural traditions, usually justified by the view that these traditions were the pillars supporting the former regime. Related to this is the question about the real meaning of the collapse of Milošević’s regime; did it mark a break-up with traditions or a combination of abandoning some and preserving others? In order to answer to this question, it is necessary first to sketch, if only in a few strokes, the nature of traditions in Serbia before the establishment of the communist regime in 1945. The premodern cultural pattern prevailed, marked by patriarchalism, authoritarianism, populism, collectivism, etc. The short, weak and interrupted liberal political tradition in Serbia waged an unequal fight against the much stronger collectivistic patterns of actions and beliefs. One could say that we do not have a serious tradition of the rule of law, or rather the culture of life under an impersonal authority of abstract legal forms. Contrary to that, we have a tradition of authoritarianism, or submission to leaders and masters.

During the state and self-management socialism the regime was not sustained only through coercion and the dogma of a bright communist future but it sought to redress its legitimacy deficit by re-evaluating the existing national traditions. A form of such efforts was the reducing of the SFRY to a "specific mixtum compositum of national socialisms" (Dimitrijević, 2003:33). At the same time, "socialist traditions" in the form of various myths and cults were cherished (the cult of Tito, the cult of the Party, etc.), which is why it is possible to speak of "a perverted life of premodern traditions in socialism" (Dimitrijević, 2003:33).

A specific re-traditionalisation took place even during the Milošević’s regime; tradition performed its basic integrative function through "forced homogenisation, de-subjectivisation, collectivism and naturalization of the group, i.e. representation
October 2000, gave rise to large hopes and the belief that the new ruling political elite had reached a consensus that democracy and market economy were the desirable forms of the Serbian set-up, that "capitalism with human face" was sought, along with the fastest possible accession to the European Union and NATO’s Partnership for Peace. However, disregarding the fact that both democratic state and politics in Serbia are still disputable, the questions of democracy and market economy cannot be reduced to a group of pragmatic political, legal and economic issues. The past has to be mastered in order to make possible a step into a different future. "This is not only, as Habermas says, about the way the tradition shapes our mentality, or only about cultural attributes and socialization – but, above all, about the processes of learning. We continuously and unobtrusively learn from major traditions but the question is whether we also learn from events reflecting the failure of traditions" (quoted from Dimitrijević, 2003:36). The above-mentioned "learning from events" is an orientation, which starts from the view that traditions are essentially open and not necessarily unquestionable. Critical overcoming of the past, including the "learning from events" (wars, crimes...) is not something to be addressed by political institutions and elites alone, but even more so by civil society actors. Foothold for the critical reading of traditions may be found in a span reaching from "early liberalism, leftist ideas and movements, attempts to establish and stabilize constitutional government, dissident actions and movements in socialism, all the way to the rich experience of civil resistance to Milošević’s regime" (Dimitrijević, 2003:36).

Views and positions expressed in interviews will, to a certain extent, reveal the traditions their learning was based on, and tell us whether and how they learnt from events, what they did and they could learn from their colleagues in the West, as well as indicate the ideas and values they were guided by in the theoretical and empirical, i.e. fundamental and applied research.

The meetings of the domestic and foreign economic experts were largely determined by the extent and quality of university education in Serbia, or more specifically by the development of economic science at our universities after the World War II. In that period social sciences, including economics, were under the strong pressure of Marxism and Marxist ideology. "Socialism and communism are understood to mean a new way of social production and distribution carried out – or imagined to be carried out - according to totally different criteria and under the influence of economic laws completely different from those prevailing in capitalism. (Maksimović, 1958:7). A conviction existed that the abolishment of private ownership over the means of production prevents private usurpation of products of somebody else’s work and private-capitalist exploitation, placing all members of the
society on an equal footing as regards the means of production and their utilization, allowing them to participate in production under equal conditions, and thereby also to take an equal part in the distribution of products. In comparison with countries of "real socialism", our "self-management socialism" was considered "softer" in political and economical terms: greater freedom of movement for people, goods and information, "socialist commodity production", quasi-market, prevailing private ownership in the agricultural sector, etc. Therefore, we will pay specific attention to the views of our respondents on whether this otherness of ours facilitate or aggravate the transition of Serbian society (economy).

In the last third of the past century, other economic doctrines were also taught at the Faculty of Economics in Belgrade and in other places in Serbia, and some attempts were made to revise Marxism-Leninism, but private property and the market were basically viewed as something alien to us. Professors who advocated market economy in their works were just as few as were the translated papers written by advocates of economic liberalism. In time, as the country gradually opened to external environment, the local experts in social sciences and humanities, although in insufficient numbers, started to obtain domestic and foreign fellowships for education and advanced studies at the western universities, and there were a few foreign visiting professors at local faculties, marking the beginning of the process of scientific exchange. However, it took a few decades for the academic knowledge to become more powerful, or rather to obtain greater social influence. In economic practice, too, there were some attempts at reforms in terms of introducing elements of the market, but went no further than that since none of the reforms succeeded, having been blocked by the one-party monopoly, i.e. the existence of a single state party.

During 1990s, de-communisation started, including also primitive anti-communism. In addition, Marxism was suppressed and avoided in professional and scientific literature.

2. Sample

Interviews with 10 domestic economic experts were carried out during June and early July 2003. The experts concerned are all men. Six of them obtained their bachelor’s, master’s and doctoral degrees at the Faculty of Economics in Belgrade, one has a bachelor’s and master’s degree from the same faculty, two of them graduated from the Faculty of Political Sciences in Belgrade, one received his doctoral degree from the CEU in Budapest, while one graduated and obtained his doctoral degree from the Faculty of Agriculture in Belgrade. Six of them had advanced training abroad, some as Fulbright fellows, or in other ways (CEU,
Budapest). Their scientific exchange with the West was of different duration, for some couple of decades, while in the case of younger respondents it lasted only a few years, mostly the last two.

At the moment, seven of them teach at faculties of the Belgrade University: 3 at the Faculty of Economics, 2 at the Faculty of Agriculture, 1 at the Faculty of Law and one at the Faculty of Philosophy in Belgrade. Of the remaining three, two are with the G17 Institute in Belgrade, and one with "Montenegrobank" in Budva. Characteristic of all our respondents, and also a widespread phenomenon in other professions, is that they have multiple jobs: in governmental and nongovernmental organisations, at faculties, institutes, etc. Having considered areas of special scientific interest to our respondents, the common ground proved to be transition, i.e. the strategy of reforms in Serbia and Montenegro. All interviewees took some part in international projects, seminars, workshops, summer schools and conferences either abroad or in the country. Their research ranged from theoretical to empirical, or more precisely applied research. More specifically, the ultimate objective of their professional and scientific analysis was to offer the Government recommendations with respect to its economic, social and educational policies.

All respondents agreed to have their identities disclosed to the public and presented as such. The taped interviews, which lasted about an hour each, were carried out with the following experts (listed in alphabetical order): Arandarenko Mihail, Ph.D., Begović Boris, Ph.D., Zec Miodrag, Ph.D., Martinović Sava, M.A., Milovanović Milić, Ph. D., Pavlović Dušan, Ph.D., Pešić Radmilo, Ph.D., Štimac Milko, M.A., Ševarlić Miladin, Ph.D., and Šoškić Dejan, Ph.D. Their task was to answer the questions and to provide their CVs. I thank all of them for their readiness to cooperate and for their professional solidarity.

3. Account of experiences in the field of scientific exchange with foreign countries: “We” and “others”

The first question we asked our respondents to answer was about their experience in scientific exchange with the West, and cases they have found particularly surprising in the area of their research?

3.1. Advance expectations

Advance expectations concerning scientific exchange with western experts were marked by curiosity in a general sense, the desire to acquire new and useful professional expertise, striving for personal promotion, and in one case even with
"awe". Several respondents said that their expectations from cooperation with western experts had been realistic.

Owing to their knowledge of foreign languages, mostly English, our participants were able to substantially reduce the element of surprise since they, using the Internet, could at least to some extent keep abreast of what was going on in academic circles in the West, and learn about the problems of interest to foreign experts, as well as about their treatment of professional and scientific issues.

Nevertheless, despite considerable possibilities to learn things, even before establishing personal contacts, face-to-face meetings resulted in both favourable and unfavourable surprises, and occasionally even failed expectations.

3.2. An attempt to classify experts: Auto-perception and hetero-perception

M.A. portrays a domestic economic expert as a person who does "this and that": advises or criticizes the government, teaches at faculties, has multiple jobs - in any case more than one - performs a number of functions and the like. Material situation forces him to "have many irons in the fire" so that he cannot devote enough time to a particular job and do it thoroughly. On the other hand, an expert in the West works "full time" and is "engaged in economic theory and pursuit of advanced economic techniques".

The majority of our respondents agree that our economic experts have "education of a general nature – turned towards the fundamentals, while foreigners have narrowly specialized knowledge" (M.Z.). Therefore, "foreigners focus their research on solving actual problems of everyday business practice, thereby establishing a link between science and economy" (D.Š.).

S.M. divides the foreign into the following "types": 1) expert-specialist; 2) missionary – the one trying to transfer to our country the ideology and the manner of behaviour characteristic of his own environment and state, and 3) an operative – a highly practical person who seeks to complete a specific field task and uses shortcuts and improvisations, without much of a standardization. It is indicative that the description of missionary behaviour referred to American experts.

B.B. differentiates experts from the West in the following way: 1) members of the academic world; 2) top-notch consultants – A series, and 3) self-styled consultants – B series. In a similar way, M.S. distinguishes between those westerners who have a "colonial approach" and come here treating us like "Black Africa", the likes of whom may also be found among the consultants, and first-rate lecturers in summer schools our side has the possibility to choose and invite. In this connection M.S. has a reasonable proposal that top-rank foreign experts should come upon our invitation and, in the first place, since their fees are high, help us solve some economic dilemmas of conceptual nature. On the other hand, S.M. has
observed that the research strategy of foreign experts is fairly standardized and uses 30% of the time for collection of information, another 30% for description of the situation and definition of problems and, most interestingly, 30% for personal marketing with 10% for the resolution of problems in the form of an offer with a number of alternative solutions.

3.3. Surprises

Positive and negative surprise can result from different circumstances, and even different human characters, which may also be associated with different cultural patterns in individual environments.

A kind of positive surprise originates from our negative prejudices about western people as "cold", unwilling to cooperate, and interested only in the material aspects of cooperation. However, M.M. says "it is far from being true". The Westerners are, in principle, very forthcoming whenever a chance for cooperation occurs, especially if interests coincide. D.Š. has a similar opinion. He was surprised with the conscientious fulfilment of promises and observance of procedures, in the sense of compliance with the rules of conduct set in advance. By contrast, everything here is "flexible, fluid", i.e. easygoing. The largest pleasant surprise for B.B. in his 20-year experience of meetings with western economists was their readiness, including even the world-renowned names in economic science, to help, to correspond and to cooperate. Moreover, their cooperation and written communication with experts from all over the world act as a way of sharing the lifestyle of the scientific elite and form a cultural pattern based on respect for other people’s time and efforts which necessitate a reply – positive, negative or vague. This same respondent is specially surprised by their strictness and impartiality in writing reviews for articles in periodicals – reviews that can teach an author a lot of things.

R.P. is surprised by the different western perception of time in terms of respecting one’s own and other people’s time, i.e. punctuality. Another surprise for him concerns the openness of foreigners in cooperation and a good habit to come to the point instead of beating around the bush, to come forward with the requested information and make the entire research process transparent. By contrast, dispersion of knowledge in our research environment develops with large difficulties. People here often believe that "we know everything" and that the involvement of other people will only interfere with our work.

However, experience with foreign experts and consultants in the domestic field is different. Some of them were experienced as first-rate professionals who could teach a person a lot, especially in terms of methodology and work discipline, while others (American experts) understood that their mission was to force their
views and procedures on us, although often inappropriate to our situation. A negative example of this kind, reported by M.S., is the attempt to impose the US mortgage act on our country. In this context three of our respondents rightly point to a conflict between the Anglo-Saxon case law and continental (European) legal principles in formulating our transition legislation. M.Š. finds it untoward that after the year 2000 some western experts wish to apply some of their models in our country and that, unfortunately, a number of our experts accept that uncritically. He thinks it is wrong that experts coming here on behalf of the international agencies are not scientific researchers, but rather management operatives. In that connection, he refers to the example of an unequal cooperation with English experts, wherein the local side was professionally and financially placed in an inferior position. In view of that experience M.Š. believes that cooperation with colleagues from other transition counties might be more gratifying, while M.M. rightly advises "one should not develop a feeling of inferiority where contacts with foreign experts are concerned".

In addition, D.P. was surprised by the behaviour of foundations from the West, which favoured specific activist mobilizing research work with participants and/or beneficiaries recognizable even by names. In that way these foundations financed round tables and summer schools, at the expense of e.g., a privatisation balance study in Serbia.

Surprise experienced by M.A. is somewhat specific. He was working with a World Bank expert on the project of our labour market. The foreign expert was a strict econometrician and insisted on dealing with the topic in the way allowing him to fully express his knowledge of the latest econometric techniques. On the other hand, M.A. chose to focus on the problems of workers to be laid off in the process of privatisation and restructuring, on identification of critical points and critical categories of workers, redundancy pay model, welfare program and economic policy measures. The approach of the American expert was abstract, analytical and, as far as problem solutions were concerned, irrelevant, while our expert took an analytical, intuitive and socially relevant approach.

Finally, another two examples of unpleasant surprise. R.P. first refers to the cancellation of the participation at a scientific meeting in the Netherlands in 1996 during the UN sanctions against our country, although it had already been agreed and the relevant paper was submitted. The second case relates to the abrupt end of the cooperation between the most important institute for agriculture in France and our institute for agriculture in Zemun, established by an intergovernmental agreement and, according to M.Š, after 5 October 2000, without the French side giving any explanation.
3.4. Strategies and outcomes

According to M.Z. our basic problem is time in the sense of long-lasting absence of economic institutions or their inadequate development, on the one hand, and a short deadline ("skipping history") to establish them on reform basis. For that reason, cooperation of domestic and foreign experts serves the purpose of exchanging arguments relevant to devise the procedures enabling us a time-wise condensed completion of economic processes, which in their countries took two or three hundred years to develop and institutionalise.

The statements of our interviewees apparently reveal that domestic experts, especially economists, have "accepted the reform in terms of values": market economy and political democracy. Having that in mind, a combination of their knowledge of the local circumstances and "boundless practical knowledge of foreigners", their pragmatism, precision, respect for their own and other people’s time and procedures, may be and has already proved to be fruitful. M.Z. considers that since globalism has prevailed, the economic sovereignty of countries, especially the small ones, has been endangered. Being small, our country is constantly monitored by the international community and that, in the first place, ensures our economic reforms. Only large countries, like China and India, can afford themselves to be exotic. This view of M.Z. is not an isolated one. In fact, it means that our country is in a semi-peripheral and dependant position in relation to the world political and economic centres.

M.A. takes as a stereotype the conviction that East and the West are two completely separated worlds and that the problems existing here are not to be found there and vice versa. At the time of globalisation, access to information is much improved; there are international data banks, surveys conducted on the basis of a uniform methodology. Nevertheless, western economists draw conclusions on us by analogy. In other words, they have dealt with the same or similar problems working on projects in Russia, the Czech Republic, Estonia, etc. For that reason, according to M.A., we should not insist on our idiosyncrasies and "application of Malinowski’s anthropological model".

It is generally believed that applied research where different economic policies are defined represents the broadest area of our scientific cooperation with economic experts from the West. Yet, claims B.B., political will is the main cause for the success of our model of privatisation. Application of certain economic policy measures depended on the (non) existence of political will more than on the views of economic experts. This view is unfortunately confirmed by our reality.

M.Š. suggests that types and the scope of scientific cooperation would best be agreed at joint meetings of scientists from several transition countries. He is confident that tripartite West–East–Serbia and Montenegro cooperation would be the
most productive. M.Š. goes on to point out that we are handicapped due to a weak research infrastructure (computer and other equipment), databases, incompatible classifications, standardizations, neglect of problems of agricultural development in scientific terms, etc. He considers it harmful that development agencies and other donors from the West, even after 2000, tend to avoid cooperation with the government institutions, favouring the NGO sector instead. To substantiate this he gives the examples of unfair competition, namely awarding the job of developing an agricultural advisory service to G17 Plus, NGO at that time (now a political party) instead of the Institute for Agriculture in Zemun, possibly due to the fact that during Milošević’s rule the Faculty of Agriculture had an officially pro-regime orientation, but the problem of clientelism in the foreign donors–local NGO’s relationship, should also be mentioned.

The results of scientific cooperation of our and western economic experts proved to be generally significant. It had a favourable effect in promoting our economic science, and was also reflected in different forms of our economic policy within the framework of transition. Many important systemic laws, such as the ones on privatisation, enterprises, etc. were formulated by the joint efforts of our and foreign experts.

4. Learning from one another

S.M. said, in the best expressed way, the shared view of all our experts: "We can learn more from them than they can learn from us". B.B. thinks that in the sphere of theory the westerners are so far ahead of us that we may only follow them as best we can. They, on their part, can profit from us through the possibility to test their theoretical assumptions in our environment and, in that process, have the assistance of our experts.

D.Š. believes that we can take over from the West the best elements in the field of high education. Therefore, by emulating the US model our post-graduate studies should place greater emphasis on the knowledge of the scientific research methodology, especially methods. He thinks that the general level of knowledge of our students, and even professors, is of a good quality but extensive style. However, the elaboration of scientific projects abroad encourages specialized knowledge and multidisciplinary approach.

M.S. thinks that the main assistance of experts from the West should be provided in the institutionalisation of the financial market, as the crucial element for both privatisation and securing the channels of transition, as well as in the fight against corruption. M.S. also observes with self-irony that experts from the West can learn from us "all the things they do not need", referring primarily to certain
distortions in political and economic, transition-related flows, such as tycooning or tunnelling.

S.M. is confident that it would be worth learning from the Westerners about the tenacity in completing a job successfully, persistence in checking the information in a number of independent sources and marketing in terms of "knowledge packaging", its sale and implementation. In addition, their standardization of research projects also deserves attention: reports, internal evaluation, quantification, applicability of research, etc. And they could learn from us mostly the things related to the understanding of problems in the local environment.

D.P. singled out the importance of cooperation with older and more experienced researchers from the West. Such were, for him, John Nellis and Vladimir Gligorov who helped him to make a study on our privatisation. M.M. believes that we can learn a lot from foreign colleagues because economic analysis abroad went far ahead and it is, today, difficult for us to catch up with it. That gap will begin to close only when our experts, educated at foreign faculties start returning to the country in larger numbers. As that will take time the only helpful thing is to cooperate with western experts. As for western experts, they could learn about the reality of their assumptions in economic analysis because they often tend to schematically apply the scientific theories and models to the reality of our transition, thus making totally erroneous conclusions and recommendations.

According to R.P., our experts are lagging behind in econometrics. In that respect R.P. criticises our official statistical services as not being yet adopted to the national accounts system of the OUN. To his mind, the lack of or unsatisfactory knowledge of foreign languages, dogmatic economic education, the delusion about our original way into socialism, absence of reform at the university, brain drain, and a brief attempt (in mid-1990s) at retraditionalisation of our social sciences and humanities in terms of "ethno-science", etc., have resulted in disappointing fact that only few of our economists keep track of developments in the world economy and even fewer can publish their papers in the world-known journals.

Since the largest number of our respondents spoke about selflessness of experts from the West, their extreme diligence and working discipline, S.M. raised a culturologically interesting question concerning the relation between work and leisure in a man’s life. The dilemma is, in fact, what comes first on the scale of values from the viewpoint of individual life and human happiness: work or leisure, or perhaps something else like a combination of moderate work and moderate enjoyment.
4.1. Tripartite economic meetings

Our respondents agreed that the optimum solution would be a combined cooperation of experts from the West, East and our country. Most frequently, they brought up that the transition countries were closer to us in view of their similar socialist experience and that some of them, were, more or less successfully, well under way of transition, which, among other things, gives us the opportunity to avoid the mistakes they had made.

In view of this, M.S. is a bit cautious due to the transition countries’ different orientations, diverse models of privatisation, degree of adequacy of their solutions, size of their respective countries and the like. M.A. emphasized that, theoretically speaking, experts from the transition countries should be ideal partners in cooperation but were, according to his personal experience, "weighed down with existential problems" and professionally insufficiently profiled. Consequently, cooperation was reduced to NGO logistic projects with elements of clientelism more than it involved serious projects. Some respondents recalled cooperation with certain think-tank groups in Hungary and Poland they cooperated with and would be glad to continue working with them. In this connection, B.B. has mentioned a project he plans to implement under the title "B triangle: Budapest – Bucharest – Belgrade", as a form of the East–East two-way cooperation.

4.2. Egalitarian liberals and libertarians: I and we, we and we

For a time, a debate on ideological orientations within the framework of the domestic economic liberalism was unfolding in the Belgrade media. In the debate, egalitarian liberals and libertarians confronted their views. During our interviews we touched upon that division and two of our respondents declared themselves as libertarians – B.B. and R.P., one said he was an egalitarian liberal – D.P. while one - D.Š., judging by his views, apparently belongs to the same orientation, although he did not so declare. Our fifth interviewee, M.Z. considered this to be a purely academic issue. However small these groups may be, their theoretical position cannot be reduced to an issue of academic nature. In this case we meet with what is called expert power due to their influence on the current economic policy and the public opinion. The main strongholds of the protagonists of these conflicting views are the CLDS, G17 Institute, Free Market Centre and a few Belgrade faculties of social sciences. It is evident that our economic science shed its uniformity and that the time of differentiation, i.e. pluralism in orientations of economic thought, has come, testifying to the attainment of academic freedoms.

According to B.B., no contemporary economist will not object anything that relates to the protection of individuals, especially if violence against an individual is
concerned. Basically, many human rights originate from economic freedoms, particularly negative freedoms – freedoms from oppression... However, when we come to those human rights that are associated with welfare, many economists begin to wonder: well, who is going to pay for it? Not one economic expert will ever be against a social program financing retraining as it increases productivity. But, it does not hold true for unemployment benefits (amounting to 80% of someone’s salary for two years). Thus, according to B.B., nobody is against a social programme as such, but it is necessary to see what effects/counter effects it will have. B.B. considers his approach as non-ideological and posits himself on the right spectrum of liberalism, but not belong to "ideological warriors" such as presumably M. Prokopijević is. However, B.B. thinks that the essential division between economists in our country is into those who know their trade and ignoramuses, rather than into egalitarian liberals and libertarians. R.P. declares himself as a moderate libertarian, although with some reservation, since he is concerned with ecology and, as a champion of market economy, knows of its limitations in that domain.

The key argument of libertarians is associated with social justice as a fluid and vague concept, which should be rejected as such.¹ M.S. thinks: "libertarianism is theoretically very thin as it may be reduced to the position “the fewer of institutions the better”. D.P. declares himself as an egalitarian liberal because he thinks that the state has some other obligations than to maintain the police, transportation infrastructure, etc., thus opposing to libertarians. D.P. claims that those who believe in market economy can support several different types of distribution. If a person supports greater distribution to the poor, it does not mean that he opposes market economy although some libertarians he knows believe that this is so and attack such statements as Marxist, rotten leftist, communist, etc.

Essential for the subject of this paper is the fact that no conditions were made to our respondents in connection with their theoretical views, as far as their cooperation with western experts is concerned. Thus, they could have been both egalitarian liberals and libertarians. However, it is less likely that they could have been supporters of the "third way" for the "renewal of social democracy" – an idea advocated by E. Giddens - and let alone of Neo-Marxist political economy. The following view of B. Mijatović supports this assessment: "The liberal idea in Serbia has weak roots. Its advocates comprise a smaller part of intelligentsia, including quite a few economists, and private entrepreneurs who by definition abhor the heavy hand of the state. There are also people who even do not know that they are liberals, but who had enough of leftist’s deviations in the bitter experience of the past

¹ "There is no such thing as social justice – that is a mere phrase which has never had real backing. I do not believe in positive economic and social rights of individuals either, but only in negatively defined freedoms, i.e. freedoms from oppression, so that nobody may hinder an individual in exercising his freedom" (Mijatović, 2003:62).
decades. Advocates, whether aware or unaware (sic), of the idea of social democracy are by far more numerous. The army of social-democracy consists of all those who during their education absorbed the leftist ideas and did not shed them later, as well as those who are afraid of risks and seek security in these tumultuous times. Thus, social-democracy has numbers on its side, while liberalism has the idea of freedom, economic argumentation and the International Monetary Fund (the emphasis is mine)” (Mijatović, 2003:60)².

Until recently, says D.Š., people here spoke about the need for deregulation, to make everything completely liberal, free etc. The liberalization of the economic system is thus experienced as the lack of regulations, which simply is not the fact. Suffice is to note that market economies of both the European countries and the USA are highly regulated. In this country, deregulation is mistaken for a "way into anarchy". And, actually, the point is something else, namely that everybody can behave freely within the framework of the set parameters, which ensure the equality of all actors in certain processes. According to D.Š., economic history of the 19th and the 20th centuries demonstrated what happens if market forces are let to operate uncontrolled: hyper-production crises, high unemployment rates, etc. In view of that experience, serious economists suggest that, in the second half of the 20th century, sustainable rates of economic growth could be secured without large fluctuations, only if subjected to the existence of some state regulation of economic processes. Taking these views of D.Š. into account, we think that he, too, may be considered to be an egalitarian liberal.

By contrast, Miroslav Prokopijević, libertarian of the CLDS argues: "The causes of poverty lie in government interventions in the economy and in the disregard of ownership rights, thus in the negation of economic freedoms" (Prokopijević, 2003:3).

5. Pros and cons of privatisation in the context of post-socialist transformation

Privatisation is understood to be among the fundamental objectives of the transition strategy in Serbia. One of its "strategists" defines it "as a process of

² "Extreme leftists" fared even worse with Mijatović who writes: "The critics of the so-called neoliberalism from the extreme left do not have an economic program of their own, and let alone an economic theory they could pit against the prevailing ones. They are involved in pure political struggle without understanding that their demands, if applied, would bring still greater poverty to the world" (Mijatović, 2003: "Politika").
transition to a society of Western-European type, implying not only a market economy, but also a body of institutions market economy is based on, starting from a democratic system, and the rule of law, to a high degree of autonomy of institutions and the accompanying systems of education, local self-government, management of administration, etc." (Vujačić, 2003:48). If to this we add the changes in the hierarchy of values and cultural patterns, it really amounts to a radical transformation of the society. The most difficult political task, in that context, is to reach and sustain a consensus on the strategy of transition.

According to a study of the Vienna Institute for International Economic Studies (WIIW) made within its Current Analysis and Country Profiles exercise under the title “Serbia and Montenegro: Transition with Organized Crime”, both reform strategies produced disappointing results. Serbia seems to have entered a transition recession, primarily as concerning production growth, while Montenegro stagnates.

The West provided financial assistance to maintain macroeconomic stability and start the reforms. The assassination of Prime Minister Đinđić has had much deeper effect than one would initially assume, as have the unfortunate developments on the local political scene conducive to a "society of affairs". This is logically reflected in rare substantial amounts of foreign capital investments, except in cases where they are safe, as in oil and tobacco industries. A number of successful privatisations ushered several large companies onto the domestic economic scene (Lafarge, BAT, Phillip Morris, Henkel, Heineken, Lukoil) but that has not, unfortunately, considerably improved the overall economic situation. It should be added that Serbia’s current debt amounted to $12.2 billion in 2003.

D.Š. claims that, due to the absence of regulations of economic processes, private entrepreneurship is occasionally abused, mostly in tie-in economic transactions where the position of an individual is of crucial importance for a private enterprise that individual is associated with to prosper or not. In addition, by issuing licenses for certain economic activities, the government creates offices where the discretionary right of an individual decides whether something will happen or not. These are all very sensitive matters which give rise to socially damaging processes, such as corruption, or the so-called cronyism and mob’s economy.

As D.Š. says European integration processes have to be joined gradually and wisely because every decision we make ultimately affects the jobs our citizens have, and that is what we have to take care of, but not in the way this was done in the past several decades, when we sought to preserve jobs by constantly helping the loss-makers. D.S. thinks that if somebody has an opportunity for profit-making at world prices - and that can be assessed - he should be supported because it is an economic activity where our comparative advantages evidently make sense and have a future. That is why, according to him, we must be careful not to open our economy too
much in a short period, as the price of it would be too high for us, since many local enterprises would not be able to sustain the competition. D.Š. thinks that our main setback today is the absence of the country’s strategic orientations for areas of national interest including strategic development plans, identification of strategic interests and a time-table of activities and institutions obliging them to make a certain measure of progress in reforms. D.Š. claims that we are spending much more time than it would be objectively required if only we had a harmonized national strategic development plan for all fields, starting from education and financial conditions to employment. It is irritating that some processes are frequently stopped or derailed without an obvious need due most often to political, not to say petty political, animosities, which are given an excessive weight in decision-making.

Strategic objective in the financing sphere is, according to D.Š., relatively simple and has to do with establishing the confidence of citizens, institutions and investors in the financial system. Without such confidence the financial system cannot perform its function and that function is again very simple, i.e. to transfer money from those who at a particular moment have more than they need to those who do not have it, but know what they can do with the money. If such a simple connection does not exist then our economy is practically doomed to having new businesses, new job openings, and new investments happening only to those people who have both business ideas and money. Therefore, if we keep the surplus money outside the economic system, which is evident, the credibility of the banks has not been restored. D.Š. believes that our stabilization has three levels: first, among Serbian state bodies; second, between Serbian and Montenegrin state bodies, and third, our joint level under European standards. Within these three levels of stabilization numerous other sectors should develop, and the financial one in particular, because the very moment when the financial market link in the economic system of the country is lost, a decline of economic activity is unavoidable.

B.B. thinks: "our model of privatisation is a success, it is good and really daring". In view of the fact that this is the last big privatisation in Europe "we have really managed to cleanse it of all the stupidities which took place in Eastern Europe and considerable success has been achieved". A number of members of our economic academic community hold various offices in the government but this is not a sufficient guarantee that the model of privatisation is being implemented in all its aspects. Certain things were not applied in our country, or elsewhere in Europe, not because the economists considered them better or worse, but because they implied specific social and political costs that politicians were not ready to support.

The privatisation model B.B. is praising is tender and auction privatisation as opposed to voucher privatisation. In his paper written with, B. Živković and B. Mijatović "A New Model of Privatisation in Serbia" (Smederevska Palanka, 2000) four basic considerations in privatisation were suggested: 1) a need to have a
majority owner; 2) equal rights for foreign and local investors; 3) the price should be important, but not the single criterion in selecting the offer; 4) other criteria to be taken into account, such as future investments, employment, etc. Itzhak Goldberg, a World Bank expert, who publicly supports the privatisation model chosen by our economists, concludes, "the choice of tender and auction over voucher privatisation was justified" (Goldberg, 2003: 340).

The legacy of social ownership is probably the most significant obstacle of the privatisation program in Serbia. Other obstacles include: 1) the weight of debts to banks, tax authorities, public utilities, social funds and commercial creditors; 2) the request of former owners for restitution of nationalized property; and 3) inherited obligations concerning the ecological damage.

Speaking of social ownership as an obstacle means primarily referring to consequence of the power wielded in the socialist system by the workers trade unions, management and employees, i.e. their expectations concerning their influence on privatisation and the obligations of the investors to retain the work force after privatisation. Goldberg emphasizes that the main lesson learned in tender privatisation has to do with social obligations and investments requirements deterring the investors. The basic logic of the privatisation program in Serbia, according to Goldberg, is to sell to strategic investors whatever can be sold on tenders, and auction the remainder to domestic investors. This means that large loss-makers should be split up and offered for sale at auctions.

Mirko Cvetković, director of the Agency for Privatisation at the time, singled out two kinds of criticisms of the domestic privatisation: 1) unacceptability of privatisation in principle, pointing to the negative consequences of its application, and 2) not questioning privatisation but challenging the theoretical consistency of the model either directly or in connection with the expected effects (Cvetković, 2003:330). The first type of criticism considers privatisation unnecessary since practice reveals that enterprises in social ownership can be efficient; the sale of capital with the proceeds paid to the budget is immoral because that capital was created by the workers concerned who are its natural owners; the so-called "dirty" capital is involved in privatisation, which is why it basically amounts to money laundering and, finally, privatisation is a way to sell out national resources and the market to the foreigners; they will keep what’s valuable and close down the remaining capacities thereby securing the market for their products (Cvetković, 2003: 330-331). According to critics of the other type, the current model of privatisation is too slow, which is why the negative effects of social ownership continue too long and the government does not have the right "to itself choose the buyers" of the capital it is selling, which is why it is necessary to distribute it for free, and then leave its concentration up to the market (Cvetković, 2003:331).
The severest critic of tender and auction privatisation among our respondents was M.Š. from the Faculty of Agriculture. He considers it faulty that after 2000, and in our country, western experts should apply their own models, which have existed in their countries for decades and have been improved there under conditions of greater economic power and higher standards. He thinks that certain solutions in the Privatisation Law are plainly unconstitutional, while some others will cost us dearly as they will require the socialization of consequences because the Law on Denationalisation has not been passed yet. It may, therefore, happen that future owners acquire some property in the privatisation process at prices which would be much more favourable than the indemnity the potential heirs might receive after the enforcement of the denationalisation act. Thus, M.Š says, after the blocked foreign exchange savings, after pyramidal banks of Dafina (Milanović) and Jezda (Vasiljević), perhaps for the third time over, we may have to socialize the national losses.

In addition, this expert in agronomy informs us that EU candidate countries have not allowed privatisation of agricultural land to foreign owners and will not permit it even on the date of their official joining of the EU, but are leaving a period of adjustment regardless of the fact that their GDP per capita is ten times the one we have. That is, for example, the case of Slovenia which has carried out the denationalisation of agricultural land. By contrast, both agricultural land and real estate are sold here. M.Š. believes that the sale of facilities (buildings) is one thing, and the sale of agricultural land quite another. He distinguishes two kinds of privatisation: national and international, considering that agricultural land should be the private property only of local owners. A special problem for him is social ownership of agricultural land, of which 250,000 hectares are in Vojvodina alone. It is, in fact, cooperative property bought or brought into cooperatives by their members, as a result of the agrarian policy in socialism. This land is now treated as social property and not as cooperative, and disputes are bound to start if it is sold. Bearing in mind that state property is not the subject of privatisation, as opposed to social, our respondent suggests that the socially-owned agricultural land should be nationalized and leased, or else registered as a natural resource. He goes on to criticize tender privatisation of our cement plants, calling it a sell-out of our natural resources to foreigners. He also objects the location given to the Slovenian firm "Merkator" in New Belgrade.

M.Š. acted as a remarkable "economic patriot", or rather as an advocate of "national interest" in economy that, ultimately, is not very far from the idea of "Serbian capitalism". However, the experience of the 20th century demonstrated the advantages of private over state and social ownership. Naturally, we must be cautious that some things should remain in state ownership, for instance, the railways, electric power utilities, oil, water and the like. In many countries where
these facilities were initially privatised their ownership is now returned to the state. The position M.Š. takes as a critic of the current model of privatisation is somewhere between the two above-mentioned types of criticisms. Namely, he does support privatisation, but of a different model. He is not isolated in his views concerning the specific features of social ownership. Out of the three essential elements of property (usus, fructus, abusus) the right of disposal (sale) does not belong to anyone, either the state or the enterprise. That is why there are proposals to amend the Constitution first, i.e. to repeal the constitutional provisions establishing social property and to re-establish state property. Only then could the state go ahead with privatisation. Instead, firms in social (non) ownership are restructured or put up for auction sale.

M.Z. points to a series of prejudices existing among experts, politicians and citizens alike, resulting from the time of Titoism, self-management economy, etc. He believes that it is still necessary to explain to the majority of citizens that income must be higher than expenditures, that prices must first rise and only then, if somebody sells goods, can the salaries rise, that money cannot be produced out of nothing, that additional printing of money cannot provide for economic development, etc. Underestimating the political maturity of our citizens somewhat, M.Z. concludes that "a great number of people here declare in favour of something, but in fact do not have an idea of what it means. Many of them do not know what they voted for". One of the key questions of our economic reform, according to M.Z., is whether the social cost of our national economic policy, which is inevitable and can hardly be paid, could be reduced, in fact, whether it can be not so much more equitably distributed to individuals and groups as distributed over time so that things could be in a way endured. Unfortunately, as M.Z. sees it, the process of dissolution of the existing economy in our country goes much faster than the process of creating new enterprises, new institutions. The problem here is that the population evidently feels the rise in the cost of reforms, but is insufficiently informed and convinced; it is given inadequate arguments explaining that sacrifices should be made for a time, so it could get better later on. That, precisely, is the task of economic and political elites - to ensure improvement in a reasonable period of time and, on the other hand, to use social patience as a development resource.

M.Z. thinks that our economists are, in principle, largely inclined towards the West. He believes that we have quite a few people well-versed in economic procedures. From a professional point of view, jurists are lagging behind because not enough of them are familiar with relevant legal procedures, especially in terms

---

3 In addition, account should be taken of the economic effects of privatisation, e.g. that according to the statistical data for the last couple of months the municipality of Beočin where the first privatised cement plant is located has the highest average earnings in Serbia amounting to 26,505 dinars compared with the average for the republic of 15,720 dinars.
of comparative law. According to M.Z. "economy is global, and law is local". However, the deficient knowledge of our economists is revealed by the fact that a small number of experts have the knowledge of the new technologies of money management, capital management, problems of the money market, capital market, etc. Unfortunately, we have too few experts versed in operational finances at the enterprise level, and banks in particular. Generally speaking, M.Z. says, we can learn from western experts to prepare ourselves for something that is to come, something that has already partly come and shall positively continue coming. That is precious. We can show them the knowledge that what is coming has to transpire and then see it through with the least possible pain. This is a kind of engineering called – transition.

Unfortunately, the present balance of economic effects is such that unfavourable dimensions of our economic situation prevail. Inadequate results in exports, production and employment are becoming an ever increasing burden for a good part of the population. Time will show how long this can be endured and what sort of political and social consequences this may produce.

6. Conclusion

"I do believe that the recommendation: 'Do as well as you can and as bad as you must, remaining all the time aware of the edge of delusion in doing so,' if we observed it, would brings us half way through to a really fruitful reform of our life"

Robert Muzil

In view of the applied qualitative methodology – ten interviews with our economic experts and a number of their papers – it is not easy to draw a complete picture of their state of mind or to fully describe the cultural pattern including their ideas, views and positions. It is just as difficult to generalize and apply that to other economic experts in our environment. Incompleteness also appears inevitable due to the nature of the methodology, because we rely more on the words of experts than on their deeds, more on their ideas than on their practice. However, taking into account the main characteristics of the socio-historical context of their statements, it is, to a degree, still possible to sketch relations in terms of we and others, I and we, and we and we, i.e. to outline the frame of mind of the interviewed economic experts of the younger and middle generations.

The key question is whether and to what extent our respondents are thinking modern, treating tradition selectively, i.e. whether they accept the basic values of modernity in terms of an ideological and practical project with market economy, private property, rationality and individualism as its main attributes (Turza, 1998:31). All of them generally accept the idea of economic liberalism, meaning the
market, precedence of private property, rational acting, and the independence and freedom of individuals. Naturally, that is associated with their acceptance of the law-abiding state, democracy and human rights. That simultaneously implies that they reject the statist mode of production, social ownership, collectivism, voluntarism, negation of individualism. However, the idea about "us", that is about our economic experts, becomes more complex in view of their division into egalitarian liberals and libertarians, a division which more or less corresponds to the former division into left- and right-wing liberals. In this case we have the relationship of the we-we type. A division of this kind is noticeable not only in the group of our respondents but also among other prominent and influential economist in Belgrade and Serbia in general. Defending their theoretical positions, polemists of both sides invoke Nozick, Stiglic, Rawls and other authors, depending on the position each one of them takes in the dispute. Other economists are closer to the social-democratic concept, or adhere to the classic Marxist or Neo-Marxist positions, and are severe critics of the privatisation as such.

We suppose that the largest "capitals" in terms of "effectively available resources and power" are in the hands of libertarians and egalitarian liberals and that, between them, libertarians are more influential. Considering Bourdieu’s view about different forms of capital and their mutual convertibility (Bourdieu, 1979: 128), it is highly likely that among the economists in Serbia at this point of time, libertarians avail of the largest symbolic and social capital which can be, or is being "converted" into economic and cultural.

On the basis of statements and efforts of the current political elite, which comprises or is supported by a number of economic experts, including the majority of our respondents, as well as on the basis of the still incomplete Poverty Reduction Strategy in Serbia, our objective, as a country, is a kind of "social capitalism", but it is not yet clear what type of "social welfare" in a "social state" we wish to have: 1) social-democratic; 2) conservative corporate, or 3) liberal. The criterion for this classification (Esping–Andersen) is the level of decommodification of social welfare – i.e. the degree of relieving social welfare services of the influence of the market. Judging by the views of the most influential economic experts the likeliest choice is the liberal scheme of social welfare typical of the USA and characterized by a high degree of commodification. However, it is not inconceivable that we will here again choose something "in-between", i.e. a hybrid solution. In our opinion the legal equality of people does not in any case mean desisting from the hierarchy of values; the fact that we cherish independence and freedom of individuals does not oblige us to abandon all solidarity. To accept market fundamentalism, to our mind, means to accept the state of nature. But, as Czesław Milosz writes: "I could never agree to the state of nature; that means that one must live somehow or other always exposed to

\[\text{A project implemented by a team of Serbian Government experts, in cooperation with the World Bank.}\]
danger, like a caveman. Evidently, capitalism is natural and whoever wants something else acts against the elementary law of survival of the strong and it is not known if attempts to disregard that law can succeed" (Milosz, 2002: 46-47). Therefore, we agree with K. Polanyi who thinks that if the market economy is an uncontrolled system it brings about the destruction of the society: the crisis of social cohesion, the crisis of the spiritual temple of human existence, the crisis. (Polanyi, 2003:13). Rejecting economic determinism Polanyi offers a new approach which makes him "possible to perceive what has not been given by the inadequate alternatives which are usually offered – limited liberalism, exclusive collectivism and sheer negation of individualism, since all alternatives tend to accord priority to a certain economic system, and not until we discover the priority of the society, the all-comprising, coherent unity of human interdependence, can we hope to outgrow the complexities and contradictions of our time" (McIver, 2003:13).

It is rather impossible to give a full and more reliable answer to the question raised in the introduction to our text about the extent and ways our respondents "learned from events" reflecting the failure of traditions. Yet, we can say that the majority of our respondents "did learn from events". It is also possible to say that our experts mentioned and took into account a number of events from our distant and more recent past and that they were aware of the failure of traditions related to those events. By way of illustration, M.Z. referred to a professor of the Faculty of Economics in Belgrade who, using a "regression analysis", recently proved that the Czech Republic would be the first transition country to enter the EU. Well, said M.Z, that is something even my grandmother knew, because the Czechs recognized the rule of Archduke Francis Ferdinand, heir presumptive, whom we assassinated later on". That historic event is "very important" and meaningful for M.Z. On the other hand, the experts also learnt from traditions which reflect success, such as: dissident actions and movements during socialism (in all truth, they included more philosophers and sociologists, fewer lawyers and still fewer politiciants and economists), civil resistance to Milošević’s regime, especially protests in 1996/97 and those in September and early October 2000. These events reflected the positive traditions of universal values: freedom, equality and the law-abiding state.

The author of "The Great Transformation" K. Polanyi tells us that tradition both disappoints and betrays us if it is our only support, and that we have to renew rather than give up the principle of individual freedom, that we cannot restore a former society "even if the fog of history hides its evils from us; we have to build again a society for us, studying those lessons and warnings of the past that we are able to grasp" (McIver, 2003:12).

If we were to identify the process of modernization with the courses of bureaucratisation, urbanization and industrialization, it would be possible to distinguish three modernization processes in Serbia. The first process of capitalist
modernization started in mid-1800s and lasted until the World War II. The second, socialist modernization which lasted from 1945 to the fall of the Berlin Wall, more specifically 2000, while the third, capitalist modernization has begun in 2000 and is still underway in the form of a painful transition. The first and second modernizations are, in fact, incomplete or semi-modernizations primarily because a sufficiently numerous and strong civil stratum was not formed in Serbia to continuously act as the main proponent of the modernization process. In addition, the socialist modernization was basically semi-modernization because despite the substantial changes in the social structure due to industrialization, de-agrarisation and urbanization, it failed to give rise to a market economy and therefore collapsed.

Europeanisation of Serbia has also followed a winding path and has not been completed. Trajan Stojanović is right to say that the Balkans is "the first and last Europe". If the EU is to satisfy universal and special cultural needs, it must include, as Stojanović puts it, the West, the Middle and the East, the Catholic, Orthodox and Christian traditions, along with those of the Jews and Muslims. Thus, all nations and all cultures, provided that they remain "attached to the French revolutionary tradition of freedom and equality before the law and as long as they accept the principle that rights also imply obligations" (Stojanović, 1998: 413). Our respondents think that integration of Serbia into Europe is an imperative. They are aware that it is a difficult and complex undertaking necessitating, in addition to political will, a lot of efforts, skill and wisdom. They, in particular, pointed to the problem of competitiveness of our goods and services speaking about the European market.

When focusing to our respondents' attitudes towards the experience of our "soft" socialism, it is obvious that most of them thinks that socialism was only "the longest and hardest road from capitalism to capitalism". More precisely, our respondents believe that this was more of a deficiency than an advantage compared with the countries of the really existent socialism. Thus, B.B. maintains that one of our faults derives from the misconception that our system was market oriented in Tito’s time, while it has never been so. Contrary to the claims of a few respondents who shared the view, we believe that the reforms attempted in self-management socialism and efforts to theoretically explain them should not be overestimated, although they could have worked to our advantage, but for Milošević’s rule of terror, the wars and regression, which have substantially delayed our transition and completely annihilated this initial advantage.

Finally, we shall give a briefest conclusion about the “we and others” relationship. We have learnt that the views of our respondents about their foreign colleagues were differentiated, but that positive prevailed. Members of the academic community in the West and "series A" consultants "fared" the best, as opposed to "series B" consultants, while the sharpest criticisms was addressed at the attempts of experts who wanted to force their solutions on us almost at any cost. It is most
probably not by chance that American experts found themselves in the role of such "missionaries". The results of scientific exchange and cooperation of our and western economic experts were both scientifically and socially significant. This cooperation had a positive effect both on the development of our economic science and on different kinds of economic policy within the frameworks of transition. Individually, scientific exchange and cooperation with foreigners reflected positively, on professional and as well as personal levels. And as for learning from one another, all respondents agreed that our experts could learn more from foreigners than vice versa.

As far as privatisation is concerned, there are opposing opinions even among our respondents. We have shown the different critical judgements of the current tender-auction transition model. At this moment, we are in the phase of transition recession. We feel that a certain period of time has to pass in order to be able to tell whether our model of privatisation has been successful. It is an old saying (Aristotle) that we may only learn the nature of things once they have reached and passed their maturity.

We shall conclude our work confident that it is our task "to make, with the least possible losses, the always necessary step towards the New! The more we disregard the transition, indispensable at the desired moment, through gradual ideas between tradition and change, the more shall we need, in order to succeed, to rely on the clear understanding of what is true, reasonable, important, intelligent and the reverse, of that which is stupid" (Muzil, 2002: 36).

References


Dimitrijević Đorđe (2003): "Kritičko čitanje tradicije i poredak slobode" (Critical reading of tradition and the order of freedom), Republika, no. 310-311, 1 – 30.06, Beograd.

Dovlatov Sergej (2002): Robijaška zona (Convicts’ Zone), Stylos, Novi Sad.


Prokopijević Miroslav (2003): "Bez ekonomskih sloboda nema prosperiteta" (There is no Prosperity Without Economic Freedoms), Ekonometar – Politika, No. 7, 22.07, Beograd.


Todorov Cvetan (1994): Mi i drugi (We and Others), Biblioteka XX vek, special edition, Beograd.


Prevela na engleski

Ljiljana Nikolić