Book Review

CLOKOTRIZATION OF TRANSITION – Critical Essays

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After three editions in Montenegro in the period 2017-2018 in the Serbian language (each of 500 copies, a volume of 103 pages), the book entitled „Clokotrism of Transition” by Veselin Draskovic was published by the most distinguished Montenegrin publisher of economic literature „ELIT” Podgorica. The book of similar content, a volume of 127 pages, entitled „Clokotrism of Transition – critical essays on social paradoxes” in English was also published in Slovenia (publisher SPH – Scientific Publishing Hub: Žilina, Slovakia / Celje, Slovenia / Kotor, Montenegro / Osijek, Croatia / Czestochowa, Poland). Then the book with the same name was published in 2018 by Polish publishers Aghart Science Publishing House, Szczecin, and Center of Sociological Research (CSR), Szczecin. Finally, this extremely high-quality book will soon be published in Moscow, in Russian.

In addition to Foreword, Conclusions, Afterwords, and comments by reviewers and readers, the book contains 27 critical economic essays. They are carefully structured in a logical order into a single compact entity, which is characterized by: truthfulness, impressiveness, and warning. The authors like Veselin are rare with such high-quality scientific works that, in a short essayist form, with condensed text and argumentative criticism, explain the crisis socio-economic reality and its most important phenomena in the countries of transition. Veselin Draskovic is an undoubtedly competent economist, since he has lived, worked and/or published in most transition countries, and after a very rich scientific opus, he wrote this short book of a pocket format, which in a simple way explains the essence of all transition problems and points to the possible paths of their overcoming. The author phenomenologically and critically brings

out the evident and degraded negative (hindering) processes and tendencies in the environment of transitional societies. It is about *systemic* errors and institutional flaws, which derive from the principles of the electoral machinery. Problems spread like weeds and threaten the development (social, economic, scientific, educational, cultural, intellectual, creative, value, etc.). As early as in the Foreword, he frankly, sincerely and originally points to the problem of research and states: *"The system is made of people who should create strong and effective institutions, ensuring their consistent and responsible application, especially during elections. The domination of rigged and privileged elections at various levels of decision-making with multiple positions of the same people and the negative selection of staff negate the institutional order."*

Since the terms *clocotrizm* (as a negative social phenomenon) and *cokotrization* (as a negative social process, which continues and is too long in most transition countries) are less familiar and difficult to translate into English and Russian, the author explains them in detail, because masterfully he chose to explain metaphorically and hypothetically (and encompassed) the essence and causes of all key problems, without political and ideological motives. He points out that he is working on the socialist phenomenon, which has become shaken and expanded in the post-socialist period. These are private (individualistic) sources of power, which derive from state and party's privileges, and cause systemic and institutional fiasco, through neglecting the development and reproduction negative factors. By discovering the truths and lies of transition, the author recognized the transitional quasi-neoliberal "shock therapy" as a velvet and wrong path, which supported the individual interests of a small number of individuals. He considers *clocotrizm* as the domination of elitist interests, the domination of politics over the economy, the institutional quasi-monism and nihilism, the apologetic and ideological abuse of power and theory, the anti-development formula, *"rebellion against elitism, injustice, and violence, it was the condemnation of evil, and irony, and the criticism of social snobbism, deceit, limited choices, protectionism of the minority towards the majority"*... Briefly, it is about a palliative *"selling snake oil"* (throwing dust in the eyes), programmed dogma and a great and sophisticated spoiler, which is the result of a crisis and long-term transition process (where the worst made success), with poor results. It seems, however, that the author's attitude that *"clocotrizm is a verified method of (mass) debilitation"* is dominant in this book!

All the essays are interesting and current, they have a clear message. A half of them refers to the critique of the cause of the general social and economic crisis, and the other half to the critique of economic science and the collapse of the higher education system. In the first essay WRITING vs. SILENCE, the academic community is criticized, which with its silence (honor of exceptions), non-action and action (dogmatic descriptors and apologists), behaves like a *spiritual accomplice* of the negativity concerned. Then comes the essay CHANGES vs CRISIS, in which the author reveals the fundamental problem of the economy: *"game with informal and privileged rules of conduct, taking place on a monopolized field, dominated by opportunity-oriented behavior... economic science (positive economy) has been increasingly differentiated for decades, while economic policy (normative economy) has been increasingly personified. That is why the gap between economic theory and economic policy is widening."* He emphasizes the imperative importance of knowledge and proposes a solution: *"Without strong institutions it is not possible to discover, limit, and penalize many hidden, destructive, and opportunity-oriented behaviors"*.

Pointing to these problems caused by “*irresponsible, chaotic, greedy, arbitrary, incompetent, authoritarian, and hegemonic ways of governing people's choices and national resources distribution*”, the author boldly points out a negative role of dirigisme habits, which are methods of governance paradoxically transformed into *elitist abuse* of public policies, manipulation and affirmation of imposed and granted privileges. All forms of *choice*, which are an eternal *metaphor* for freedom, have been reduced. Freedom and democracy endanger the personality cult (of the reformers, the leaders, “*the saviors from which should to be saved*”).

The author also criticized globalization, which, because it bred and buried much, encompassed and neglected, annulled and destroyed, determined and distributed, dismantled and infected. It significantly influenced transition flows as its “diminished image”. That is why he wrote with melancholy “*I would like to change the interest globalism for good old cosmopolitanism*”. Of course, he does not miss the opportunity to recount the negative phenomena that have been criticized for several decades in his extremely rich creative work: quasi-institutionalization, non-market economy, “concealed” economy, apologetic and irrational rhetoric, the sociopathological braking mechanism, monopoly rent (with no limits), original methods of organized use of privileges, rapacious privatization, in order to redistribute the national wealth and gain huge, illegitimate profits.

Criticizing obedience, convenience, negatively selected staff structure and demagogic party reiterations, the conflict between privileged individuality and a powerless **socialism, which is mostly fueled by ignorance, the author stands for** knowledge, order, labour, pluralistic, developed, and efficient formal and informal institutions, the rule of law, commitment, radical reforms, change of mind and behavior – not convenience. In that sense, he states that the apparent crisis of mentality and social relations, apathy and ambitions have created the specific matrix of dementia: “*The pyramid of values has been reversed (long ago). Ideas and vices, virtues and defects, intellectual and party elites, knowledge and property, power and weakness, creations and imitations have been replaced. An apathetic view of the same image and listening to the same story has been prolonged. There is no awareness of the apparent and the real*”.

This book contains many useful suggestions, messages and lessons from the author, from which we will list only a few: The crisis prolongs the deficit of institutional control and the concentration of privileged interests; It was paradoxical that the causative agents of the crisis decide to leave it; New time requires new mindset and behavior; Even the economic necessity is not sufficient for changing the value system; The developed world is arrogant and imperfect, but powerful. We have to adapt to it, sooner or later. Civilization adaptation is imperative, because it means survival. Confrontation is the privilege of unreasonable; Postponing changes means delaying progress; Freedom means good rules, not good players; The rhetoric of cheap promises degrades and demystifies the reforms; Practice has proved that competition, in all fields, is always an issue; If there is a *deficit of institutions*, which serve to reduce the uncertainty of human interactions, opportunities for solving social and economic problems are also reduced; Alternative institutions turned the story of institutionalization into its opposite. Their dominance is delaying development; one of the most important conditions for development is compromise between individual and collective interests; in reality, there is no individualism of all, only *rare*, privileged, not-on-marketed selected. There is an *antagonism* between freedom of the rare and the mass non-freedom.

In essays dedicated to criticism of the economic science V. Draskovic states: “*Modern economic theory is by its academicism closer to mathematics than to social sciences. Modern*

macroeconomists formulate theories with mathematical description, they collect huge amounts of data and apply econometric methods to reach empirical conclusions, which are supposedly without prejudice and ideology. A significant part of economic science (and not only economic) has become only a cover of mathematical theory". The rich experience of a lecturer in several countries of transition, author of numerous scientific monographs and articles, editor of international economic journals, his human sincerity and the acquired care of a professional economist have enabled him to prefer non-institutional economic theories (with selective theoretical synthesis), but not as universal but rather satisfactory to understand and solve many economic and social problems. Without reserve for institutional pluralism, the author cautiously points out and warns that one should bear in mind the danger of the fact that the state institutional matrices largely determine (and sometimes abuse) the parties in power. His scientifically neutral and critical papers are a valid and useful attempt to bring back *the lost soul* of economics: *raison d'être*, logic, poetics, metaphors, criticism, rhetoric, thoughtfulness, philosophy, character, art, reputation, argumentation and literality, because economics is *all that together!*).

As a renowned economist and distinguished university professor, the Author rose above all apologetic, artistic, monopolistic and other contemporary writing barriers. By the strength of convincing scientific arguments, courageous and unusual criticisms of the most significant negative phenomena of transition and clear style Professor Veselin Draskovic provoked the search for many answers to open issues of transition.

For this reason, I suggest that this rare, quality and original book of essays of impassable value should not only be read, but often returned to.

Author

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