

## [Editor's Note]

### New Series on the History of Economic Thought in Transitional Countries

It has been nearly twenty years since the fall of the Berlin Wall and the dissolution of the Soviet Union. This new series of papers in economics is concerned with the development of economic thought in former socialist countries in Eastern and Central Europe.

There is good reason to count the appearance and disappearance of Eastern and Central Europe's socialist regimes among the major events of the twentieth century. The history of those regimes, which, for the most part, fell into the orbit of the Soviet Union, was not very long, but the controversy they generated about the management of socialist economies became a paramount issue in the history of economic thought in the twentieth century. The transition from capitalist to socialist societies has been studied from a number of different angles, but it is the transition from socialist to capitalist societies since the 1990s that is now of greater interest and constitutes a dominant theme in this area of economic research.

Focussing on economics, there has been much discussion in theoretical terms of problems related to 'economic accounts' and 'market and plan,' and insofar as each country has a different point of view and different priorities, the arguments from around the world vary widely. In addition to theoretical studies, analysts in former socialist economies have also been tackling the economic policy tasks specific to the conditions in their own countries—a challenge they are still

grappling with today. Framing its theses in terms of the history of economic thought, our new series takes up the cases of some of these countries. It examines the conditions and problems they have experienced and it introduces the kinds of arguments being developed by their own economists. The aims of the series are as follows:

1. To present new viewpoints: Debate about the transition from socialist to capitalist societies seems to be less active than discussion of the transition from capitalist to socialist societies. Yet the main discussion today tends to be confined to theoretical and general concerns and is taking place largely among scholars of Eastern Europe and comparative systems. However, the historical process in Eastern Europe since the 1990s is regarded as a unique phenomenon in the history of political economy, and for that reason we believe that the new series devoted to this important and timely subject will be of value to many readers. A landmark work in this field is Hans-Jurgen Wagener, ed., *Economic Thought in Communist and Post-Communist Europe* (London and New York: Routledge, 1998), which discusses the historical development of economics in six countries from the end of the Second World War to the 1990s and points out important issues to be investigated further. The several papers in our series are all written by scholars other than those who contributed to Wagener's volume, and since their approaches also dif-

fer, they examine new issues and raise new questions.

2. To increase knowledge about the different historical trajectories of former socialist economies: The increasingly international character of work in the history of ideas in economics, through conferences and seminars, has afforded us growing opportunities for contact and discussions with East European and Russian scholars. To build deeper mutual understanding, we must achieve a solid grasp of their views and their assumptions as we explore and interpret their expositions of the problems of 'the transition of socialist to capitalist economies.' Many Japanese do not yet know enough about the history of the political economy in the former socialist countries of Eastern and Central Europe to be able to fully appreciate the differences in economic thinking among them. We hope that this series of papers will provide an opportunity for readers to acquire more knowledge and information about the history of the political economy in several of those countries.

Our new series includes case studies on Russia, Hungary, Poland, and the Czech Republic. An article by Dr. Joachim Zweynert discusses the case of Russia. Zweynert is

the author of *Eine Geschichte des Ökonomischen Denkens in Rußland, 1805–1905* [A History of Economic Thought in Russia, 1805–1905] (Marburg: Metropolis, 2002), for which he won the European Society for History of Economic Thought (ESHET) Book Prize in 2003. He has been very active writing about recent economic debates in Russia, producing numerous articles for *Europe-Asia Studies*, for example. To discuss the Hungarian case, we asked Professor Aladar Madarasz to contribute an article. Prof. Madarasz is well-known as a researcher on the German Historical School, and he has also participated in various sorts of international research project. We have requested two extremely capable scholars to write articles on the cases of Poland and the Czech Republic.

There was a session on 'Economics under Political Repression' at the 11th annual ESHET conference in 2007, during which both Dr. Zweynert and Prof. Madarasz read a paper. We truly hope that this series of papers, both reflecting and projecting a deeper interest in international issues, will enhance the knowledge of our readers and stimulate their thinking on the issues involved.