

Heilbroner's "Analysis and Vision in the History of Modern Economic Thought":

A Necessary Addendum

By Günther Schmitt

In his brilliant "Analysis and Vision in the History of Modern Economic Thought", *Heilbroner* 1990, „wishes to review and interpret the manner in which modern development have been perceived by economists" (p. 1097). He also inquires "into the successes and failures of economic thought in anticipating the mark of actual events" (ibid). Therefore, in explaining that "in all 'periods' of capitalist development a few voices attain commanding presence ...", *Heilbroner* hopes "that my selection of voices will carry a defensible rationale" (p. 1098). However, he confines himself "almost entirely to Anglo-American opinion", because of "lacking to expertise to speak about European or Japanese or Third World views of socialism and capitalism" (ibid).

Although *Heilbroner's* "analysis" is restricted to "Anglo-American opinion", in part II of his article dealing with the "Late Depression Views", he discusses the well-known "Keynes-Hansen Assessment" (p. 1098) but also the "Expectations for Socialism: The Mises-Lange Debate" (pp. 1100 - 1101). Both controversies are, therefore, seen and analyzed by Heilbroner with respect to and in direct coherence with "the prospects of the outlook for capitalism at the end of the 1930s" which, in fact, were "couched in apprehensive terms, even by its supporters" as he maintains (p. 1101).

Such an assessment, in fact, is only true with respect to the controversy between Keynes and Hansen, but is irrelevant with respect to the "Mises-Lange Debate". Actually, this debate has already been started in 1920 by *von Mises'* article "Die Wirtschaftsordnung im sozialistischen Gemeinwesen" published in "Archiv für Sozialwissenschaften". This article was stimulated by Lenin's New Economic Policy inaugurated in order to prevent the total collapse of the Soviet economy after the economic chaos during the period of "war-communism" (1917 - 1921). That article of *Mises* was, of course, the basis of his book „Die Gemeinwirtschaft. Untersuchungen über den Sozialismus" published in 1932, whereas his original article has been translated in English and published not before 1935 in a book on "Collectivist Economic Planning" which has been edited by von Hayek. Heilbroner