

VI THE PRIVATIZATION PROCESS

In early August, the Serbian Journalists Trade Union called the Anti-Corruption Council to review the lawfulness of the bankruptcy of Television Cacak and the privatization preceding the bankruptcy. The call came after the signal of TV Cacak was switched off on August 1. The RBA previously revoked the licenses of that station over unpaid fees, while the Commercial Court (at the proposal of the creditor, the distribution company "Pro Vision", to which TV Cacak owed almost 900.000 dinars) initiated bankruptcy proceedings due to lasting insolvency. According to media reports, the explanation of the Court's decision said that the overall debt of TV Cacak amounted to 42.6 million dinars. The Serbian Journalists Trade Union reminded that TV Cacak started to operate on January 17, 1999 as a municipal public company, which was privatized on December 11, 2009. Since then, the station has been the property of the entrepreneur from Cacak Zoran Bojovic, namely the members of his family. Bojovic is also the owner of Radio Cacak and the weekly "Cacanski glas".

According to media reports, the employees of TV Cacak, who lost their jobs after the station went into bankruptcy, have placed the blame for the demise of their employer on the city. "People in the city administration have caused Cacak to become one of the rare cities in Serbia that was left without a TV station", an employee said, adding that "they sold us out; we were privatized by force of the law. It did not have to be like this, we can see that from the examples of cities like Nis or Kragujevac, which have retained their TV stations". People who have lost their jobs look for who to blame for their situation among those who have observed the Law, which provides for mandatory privatization of state-owned media; these people say that the Law did not have to be apply to them, since it did not to media in Nis or Kragujevac. It is symptomatic that Serbian Journalists' Trade Union and many others stopped short of proposing any solution for the disastrous media situation other than the cancellation of the privatization, i.e. return to budget financing. In other words, the state is called to "safeguard its media" at the expense of private media and to violate its own laws prescribing mandatory privatization of media companies. At the same time, the Trade Union fell short of calling the state to ensure fair market conditions or consistent state aid control, which would promote the survival and growth of competitive media and not only those subsidized by the state.