



*4. Letter, November 2021*

**Society, state and the national seen from Left**

Dear friends of political philosophy,

What is to be understood as a society, what role the state and the national play in this is one of the most controversial orientations of political philosophy. In any case, the meaning and purpose of these institutionalities or realities in historical change is different when seen from the right than from the practical perspective of the left, where it is a matter of achieving more humane, higher forms of civilisation.

Thus nationality was formed in struggles against foreign domination, national liberation movements rose up against nationalist-fuelled colonialism. Whole peoples and states mobilised their forces against fascist powers. The imperialism and extreme national character of the USA is also contrasted or even counteracted by other social formations and state conceptions all over the world as well as by the failed states left behind.

All this takes place in the developmental context of the capitalist social formation: From industrial capitalism on through the world war period, with attempted socialist society formations, global confrontations and the reintegration of those structures into the world capitalist system. Structural changes led to new types of a social-capitalist sociality. With its neo-liberal transformation and complete globalisation, the peak has been passed and an epoch of setback and system-historical transition has opened.

In the now globally interconnected planetary space, constituted societies form a turbulent and contradictory scene of some 200 nations as defined by the UN. These have their own cultural character and include partly different cultural peoples. The civilizational spectrum ranges from devastated states, through an enormous, more or much less and highly diversely developed field, to the major states of China, India and the USA. The European Union is a special case in this regard.

A look at this tense field of development and the divided and troubled character of the basic capitalist type teaches the following. It is not the overcoming of the national that is in the interest of the majority of humankind, but rather the many times outstanding achievement of a viable constitution that offers life possibilities as states and cultural areas that are as socially and infrastructurally equipped, characterised by the rule of law and democracy, and capable of asserting and determining themselves politically and economically.

This constitution is relatively advanced in the shape of the European welfare state. The state penetrates society from the top down to everyday life in juridical, fiscal and regulatory terms like a mycelium, whereby democratic capitalism, quasi the other way round, is politically representative. However, this is only halfway, because the capitalist economy imposes far-reaching dependencies, influences and elementary conflict situations.

Again, it becomes clear that the sought-after better world does not require the stripping away of the national. Beyond cosmopolitan illusions, the question for the future is rather: In view of the still overwhelming economy of forced growth, the complexity of international relations and the problematic situation in the capitalist world system, how could a community democrati-

cally constituted in the sense of popular sovereignty exist as such and take a self-determined path of development?

The fact that the commodity and capital economy is only one hand of social labour, while the weight of the production of communal, social-infrastructure and civilizational foundations is growing, encourages taking the aforementioned self-determined path. These economics contradict the form of the exploitation economy, and so a differently polarised and regulated socio-economic approach is emerging in the existing. Since this has a local and national economic dimension that is essentially self-referential, it underpins the principle of sovereignty.

The self-determination of a sovereign sociality also constitutes the existential determination and expression of actual democratic practice. It thus constitutes an inalienable principle and right of society. It therefore means that purposes pursued jointly by states or certain competences, including sovereign competences, can be delegated to cooperative institutionalities, but can also always be withdrawn in a sovereign manner. There is a whole series of such alliances of states, while the EU is widely different.

The EU is constituted as an unbounded development area for industrial agriculture, capital and finance. An assembly of delegates, declared as a parliament, does not play a decisive role. The 27 legal, social and national states are integrated under a socially disconnected institutionality. This institution pretends to be consultative, but in cooperation with the ECB and the ECJ, it is working hard to usurp sovereign rights, to make the hybrid, half-baked construct effective and to form a political-economic and military bloc in the capitalist world system.

Also materialised in this experiment is a liberalist political philosophy that denies the social nature of being human, undermines the sovereign constitution of society in the interests of detached capital and financial powers and through its supranational institutions, and finally masquerades such as a community of shared values. In response, right-wing and nationalist movements are forming in reaction to the economisation and dissolution of society, and thus the concrete alternative and political emancipation that exists as a latent potentiality threatens to be stifled.

From the left, the following questions arise in this problem situation and battle zone. Which not only social-ecological, but alternative economic constitution and democratic practice should govern? Which regional or international cooperation and institutionalities make sense and are legitimate from this point of view? What respect, what regulations and what solidarity must be demanded in a multipolar world with different social existences and designs so that future catastrophes can also be better countered?

Best regards,  
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