

Introduction

It often happens that the moment of crisis intensifies the existing social conflicts thus allowing to capture their essence. The present volume of *Political Studies* was prepared at a very special time of the pandemic. I dare to put forward a thesis that the crisis associated with the pandemic is not a natural disaster falling on us from outside. This is the crisis of *this world*, also in the social sense, just like today's social relations absorbed into their world the relation between people and the rest of nature.

If this is true, the crisis related to the pandemic – which since March 2020 has suddenly become the reference point, the major circumstance and the framework for global political and economic processes as well as, in a broad sense, social ones – first, it is not only a “pandemic crisis”. It reveals a larger and multidimensional crisis in which the pandemic became an additional element and a specific detonator. Secondly, it makes it possible to place the problems of the key phenomena and processes of today's social world in a new light. It seems at the same time that the social world today is not but an abstract concept but it is empirically incarnated in the form of the processes of global capitalism, which totalizes all dark corners of mankind (not only in the spatial understanding) and where the state (or, rather, states in plural) remains the key phenomenon in the form it shaped, namely the capitalist states.

The intention of the present volume is then to touch upon the problem of the shape of today's capitalist states within their interactions with the tendencies occurring in the global system at the specific moment of the historical development of *real capitalism*. It is hoped that this will help to approach not only the understanding of this moment but also those tendencies and forms.

The first three articles deal with different theoretical traditions which provide some propositions to understand the relation between capitalism and the state in their interaction. In my text, which undertakes the problem of the activity of capitalist states as “ideal collective capitalists” in the clash with the pandemic reality, I attempt to show the up-to-date character and the creative potential of the approach represented by Karl

Marx and Friedrich Engels. Maciej Kassner reconstructs Karl Polanyi's perspective by analyzing the position of the state in different orders of the world capitalist economy. Piotr Rutkowski looks into the rhizome tangles connecting capitalism, the state and the machines in reference to the thought of Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari.

The next two articles refer to the significant processes characterizing contemporary global capitalism. Joachim Osiński and Izabela Zawiślińska point to the importance of the giant of financialization by showing this phenomenon not only in the economic but also political contexts. Tadeusz Klementewicz proposes a number of theses concerning the importance and shape of the division into the core and the periphery in contemporary world.

The next three authors undertake the analysis of the incarnation of the ongoing global processes in concrete spaces. Tadeusz Popławski develops the concept of post-Fordism and puts forward the thesis on the distinct character of the class of subcontractors by analyzing the processes mainly referring to them on an example of Polish capitalism as peripheral capitalism. Bogusław Pytlik analyzes the center-periphery relation in the context of various models of capitalism and the formation of dependent capitalism on the example of the Visegrad Group countries, while Przemysław Sieradzan makes a comprehensive case study by analyzing the processes concerning the geopolitical and economic relations in global capitalism on the example of Uzbekistan.

The two articles concluding the leading topic of this volume place emphasis on broadly understood issues of democracy, subjectivity and agency of *demos* in the context of the topics under discussion. Przemysław Potocki analyzes how the public opinion of selected countries of the world perceives foreign policy of the United States in the years 2001–2016, while Kamil Minkner seeks the possibility of realizing global democracy in the process of “agonist cosmopolitanism” based on a dialectic connection of agonist multipolar order according to the concept by Chantal Mouffe with cosmopolitan democracy.

The texts dealing with the key problems connected with the functioning of contemporary capitalist states in the global system are then accompanied by the reviews on other selected political issues.

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