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## ‘The ideal collective capitalist’ in times of the pandemic

**Keywords:** *capitalist state, pandemic, Covid-19, Marxism*

**Abstract:** *The article analyzes the actions of capitalist countries in the situation of the crisis related to the Covid-19 pandemic, primarily the actions of the world’s leading economic powers (the United States, China, Japan, Germany, India). An attempt is made to find the characteristics and motifs of these actions. On this basis, an assessment is made of the adequacy of the definition of the capitalist state by Friedrich Engels as “the ideal collective capitalist”.*

“And the modern state, it is but an organization which a bourgeois society creates for itself with the aim of protecting the general outside conditions of the capitalist mode of production from an attack both by workers and by particular capitalists. Regardless of its form, the modern state is essentially a capitalist machine, a state of capitalists, an ideal collective capitalist”<sup>1</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> F. Engels, *Anty-Düring*, [in:] K. Marks, F. Engels, *Dzieła*, vol. 20, Warszawa 1972, pp. 310–311. For the German original see: [http://www.mlwerke.de/me/me20/me20\\_239.htm#Kap\\_II](http://www.mlwerke.de/me/me20/me20_239.htm#Kap_II) (24.05.2021).

The above quotation from “Anti-Düring” by Frederick Engels is one of the best-known reference points for various theories of the capitalist state which seek inspiration in the Marxist thought. What does, however, “ideal collective capitalist” (*der ideelle Gesamtkapitalist*) mean assuming that capitalism is understood as a system of social relations shaped by striving at a never-ending accumulation of capital? The Covid-19 pandemic is the moment to rethink the essence of the capitalist state in the context of the extraordinary situation of global character. The aim of the present article is to analyze the activities of the states confronted with the crisis associated with the pandemic – above all, the leading economies of the contemporary world (the United States, China, Japan, Germany, India). This is the basis to attempt at finding the characteristic features of those activities and their motifs. In this way, the adequacy of viewing the capitalist state as “an ideal collective capitalist” will be assessed and clarified.

The present text adopts the hypothesis that the *modus operandi* of capitalist countries is determined by two issues. Firstly, it is striving at a competitive economic growth, which means possibly the most effective multiplication of the capital within the borders of a given country in competition with others. This is first of all reflected in the care given to the Gross Domestic Product index, which is the measure of success or failure of each of the states within the world capitalist system. Secondly, this is striving at inner coherence, both in the context of competition between particular capitals and conflicts between its particular sections as well as class conflicts. The existing conflicts between classes and within classes can lead to the activities which would differ from those that would be optimal from the point of view of the whole. Ultimately, this effectiveness is verified, however, by the level of economic growth in relation to other countries which reversely affects class (and intra-class) conflicts. This approach is based on a critical review and re-evaluation of debates on the capitalist state which developed within various approaches rooted in the Marxist and broadly understood post-Marxist thought of the last fifty years, especially of such authors as Elmar Altvater, Colin Barker, Clyde W. Barrow, Fred Block, Susanne de Brunhoff, Simon Clarke, Heide Gerstenberger, Chris Harman, Joachim Hirsch, John Holloway, Bob Jessop, Ralph Miliband, Wolfgang Müller, Christel Neusüss, James O'Connor, Claus Offe, Nicos Poulantzas, Sol Picciotto, Claudia von Braunmühl, Kees van der Pijl and Eric Olin Wright.

## Rescuing the economy

In *Capital* Marx argued that the capitalist mode of production was based at the same time on the labour process (*Arbeitsprozeß*) and the process of multiplying the value (*Verwertungsprozeß*). The labour process means that human labour transforms other parts of nature, and goods appropriate for the species essence of humans are created, which takes place in each mode of production. The process of value multiplication is specific for capitalism, basing on the production of commodities not due to the use value but the exchange value, which is a moment of the cycle of an endless accumulation of capital<sup>2</sup>. The effectiveness of each unit of capital does not mark the utility of products made with its label but the increase in comparison with other capitals. The labour process and the production of use values do not cease to exist – we remain a specific part of nature with definite needs – but they are still subordinated to the process of value increase and the production of exchange values. In other words, in the capitalist mode of production it is the needs of “economy”, that is capital accumulation, which determine what is produced even if this means no satisfaction of human needs (although full independence in relation to these needs is impossible).

In short, each capitalist state operates within the same frameworks. In the context of the pandemic and the associated crisis, “rescuing people” co-existed with “rescuing the economy” understood as rescuing the competitive possibility of accumulation on the level of firms and states. At the same time, like the process of value multiplication cannot become fully independent from the labour process, “rescuing the economy” also could not become independent from “rescuing people” when the collapse of health protection and considerable numbers of the sick and the dead themselves are a huge economic problem which – what is more – threatens with huge social conflicts.

Marx also observed that in times of crisis – which again can be referred not only to individual capitalists but also to capitalist countries: “How much the individual capitalist must bear of the loss, i.e., to what extent he must share in it at all, is decided by strength and cunning, and

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<sup>2</sup> K. Marks, *Kapitał*, vol. 1, [in:] K. Marks, F. Engels, *Dziela*, vol. 23, Warszawa 1968, pp. 205–230.

competition then becomes a fight among hostile brothers. The antagonism between each individual capitalist's interests and those of the capitalist class as a whole, then comes to the surface, just as previously the identity of these interests operated in practice through competition"<sup>3</sup>.

In fact the economic crisis connected with the pandemic considerably affected the whole world economy, thus becoming the deepest worldwide economic breakdown since the Great Depression in the 1920's and 1930's<sup>4</sup>. It should be emphasized that the pandemic broke out at the moment when economic problems had already been growing. In this context, Ligang Song and Yixiao Zhou pointed to a number of pre-pandemic phenomena such as the lowest economic increase in China during four decades, a "synchronized economic slowdown" in all leading economies of the world, giving up the role of driving growth through international trade, a drop in the pace of production increase in all leading economies, inefficiency of the monetary policy as its stimulator and the appearance of the phenomenon of deflation, high levels of debts due to the attempts to undertake such a policy, instability of the global financial sector and international commodity markets and, finally, an increasing level of inequalities in incomes in a number of countries<sup>5</sup>. Accompanied by unevenness and complexity of economic growth characteristic of the world capitalism, these phenomena coincided with the tensions between the top economic powers – especially the "trade war" between the USA and China started in March 2018 whose causes were not solved by the initial agreement between those countries made in January 2020. Therefore, the outbreak of the pandemic intensified the existing problems and tensions.

According to the estimates of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development from December 2020, the estimated decline of the world GDP in 2020 was expected to be 4.2%. A decrease of the G20 countries treated as a whole was estimated at 3.8%, and within the Euro zone at 7.5%. The estimates of this drop were 3.7% for the United

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<sup>3</sup> K. Marks, *Kapitał*, vol. 3., [in:] K. Marks, F. Engels, *Dziela*, vol. 25, part 1, Warszawa 1983, pp. 383–384.

<sup>4</sup> G. Gopinath, *The Great Lockdown: Worst Economic Downturn Since the Great Depression*, IMF Blog, <https://blogs.imf.org/2020/04/14/the-great-lockdown-worst-economic-downturn-since-the-great-depression> (14.04.2020).

<sup>5</sup> L. Song, Y. Zhou, *The COVID-19 Pandemic and Its Impact on the Global Economy: What Does It Take to Turn Crisis into Opportunity?*, «China&World Economy» July–August 2020, No. 28/4, p. 4.

States, 5.3% for Japan, 5.5% for Germany, 9.9% for India. An increase was found only for China – at the level of 1.8%<sup>6</sup>.

The first reactions of political authorities frequently expressed disregard for the new coronavirus. In particular, a remarkable collection of quotations from the first months of 2020 is provided by the statements of the USA president Donald Trump. Let us emphasize that Trump was able to claim publicly that till April “when it gets a little warmer,” the virus will “miraculously goes away” (10 February) and that it “is very much under control in the USA” (24 February), while at the same time, in a private conversation, he considered it “deadly” (7 February)<sup>7</sup>. However, examples of the official neglect of SARS-CoV-2 were also provided by high-rank representatives of other countries’ authorities. The German minister of health Jens Spahn stated on 22 January that the risk in relation to the population of Germany is “very low”, “there is no cause for concern”, and the virus itself was much less dangerous than the earlier SARS virus<sup>8</sup>. Despite the closeness of the Chinese epicenter of the pandemic and the first cases of infection with the new virus already on 28 January 2020, the political authorities of Japan, with prime minister Shinzo Abe at the top, were blamed for many cases of scandalous negligence in this respect – with a simultaneous insistence of the prime minister, expressed even on 14 March, that the Olympics should be organized in Tokyo in 2020, according to schedule<sup>9</sup>. The key economies of the world delayed an introduction of restrictions associated with the pandemic. According to the authors from the European Union Institute for Security Studies, more serious ones (lockdown in Wuhan) took place 12 days after the officially ascertained fatal victim of Covid-19 and 27 days after the first officially observed case (with significant doubts concerning no record at an earlier stage of the spread of the disease). More serious restrictions in Japan (closing the schools, a ban on mass

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<sup>6</sup> OECD, *Turning hope into reality*, «OECD Economic Outlook», <https://www.oecd.org/economic-outlook/> (15.12.2020).

<sup>7</sup> Trump’s statements on his subject were collected by a member of the House of Representatives of the USA from the Democratic Party Lloyd Doggett: L. Doggett, *Timeline of Trump’s Coronavirus Responses*, <https://doggett.house.gov/media-center/blog-posts/timeline-trump-s-coronavirus-responses> (15.12.2020). The words quoted here from a private conversation (revealed in September 2020 in a book by a journalist Bob Woodward) were not denied by Trump: BBC News, *Trump deliberately played down virus, Woodward book says*, 10.09.2020.

<sup>8</sup> Zeit Online, *Bundesregierung: Neues Virus kein Grund für Alarmismus*, 22.01.2020.

<sup>9</sup> K. Nakano, *Japan Can’t Handle the Coronavirus. Can It Host the Olympics?*, «The New York Times» 26.02.2020; BBC Sport, *Coronavirus: Tokyo Olympics will go ahead, says Japan’s PM Shinzo Abe*, 14.03.2020.

events) took place, respectively, 14 and 42 days after those events. In Germany (lockdown in Bavaria) it happened 11 and 53 days after, while in the USA (orders to stay at home) 23 and 62 days. In connection with such a comparison, it is pointed out that the fastest reactions were shown by such countries as South Korea and Singapore – in both cases several days before the first fatal victim<sup>10</sup>.

The attitude of the authorities was not accidentally an element of delay in undertaking the activities which could have a negative impact on economy. The best reflection of this were again the words of Donald Trump: “WE CANNOT LET THE CURE BE WORSE THAN THE PROBLEM ITSELF,” – he twitted with capital letters on 22 March, 6 days after 15-days’ restrictions were introduced which – significantly – were undertaken after record falls in the American stock market on 16 March<sup>11</sup>. Among the many similar statements by Trump there was an interview given on 24 March to the journalists from the Fox News station. He stated, “you can destroy a country this way, by closing it down, where it literally goes from being the most prosperous – I mean, we had the best economy in the history of our country three weeks ago”. And added:

“(...) we have to put the country to work.

Look, you’re going to lose a number of people to the flu, but you’re going to lose more people by putting a country into a massive recession or depression. You’re going to lose people. You’re going to have suicides by the thousands. You’re going to have all sorts of things happen. You’re going to have instability. You can’t just come in and say, “Let’s close up the United States of America.” The biggest – the most successful country in the world by far.

You know, when I came in, when I was elected – and you knew this number – China was going to overtake us in the year 2019. Wasn’t even close. We went way up, and they didn’t. We’ve done great. They pay us a fortune in tariffs and everything else. And yet, we have a good relationship with them. We just signed a trade deal. But we’re the number one in the world by far.

<sup>10</sup> F. Gaub, L. Boswinkel, *WHO’S FIRST WINS? International crisis response to Covid-19*, «European Union Institute for Security Studies (EUISS)», Brief 11, May 2020, p. 3.

<sup>11</sup> K. Mejdrich, *Stocks plunge in largest 1-day drop over coronavirus crisis*, «Politico» 16.03.2020; M. Grew, C. Oprysko, *Inside the White House during ‘15 Days to Slow the Spread’*, «Politico» 29.03.2020; M. Haberman, D. E. Sanger, *Trump Says Coronavirus Cure Cannot ‘Be Worse Than the Problem Itself’*, «The New York Times» 23.03.2020.

And now a few people walk into the Oval Office and say, "Sir, we have to close up the country." I said, "What are you..." I said, "What are you talking about?"<sup>12</sup>.

For a comparison, the German minister of health stated on 4 March 2020: "The rule is always binding; in case of doubts, security of the population is a priority, also before economic interests", which did not change the fact that in the very same month *Bundeskanzlerin* Angela Merkel spoke about the necessity of undertaking "total" measures to keep up the German economy, and minister of economy Peter Altmeier said that "we have to do everything to get the increasing forces to the top again when the number of infections is falling, which enables return to public life and when companies can produce in a normal way again"<sup>13</sup>. In November 2020 Merkel expressed her opinion that "well-controlled pandemic is the best for economy"<sup>14</sup>. It deserves to be emphasized that studies were conducted as early as in March which clearly indicated that also from the economic point of view curbing the spread of the virus should be the priority since otherwise there would be much bigger economic problems in the future<sup>15</sup>.

In Japan, doctor Shigeru Omi, chair of the government's expert committee on the virus, stated in an interview with *Financial Times* journalists in November 2020 that Japan was determined to keep the economy open even as case numbers were rising<sup>16</sup>. That toned in with what the Japanese minister of finances Taro Aso said in June: "We are determined to protect the Japanese economy"<sup>17</sup>. Significantly, it was economic problems which were most probably the basis of Shinzo Abe resigning from his position (officially, due to health problems) and being replaced by the former chief of his cabinet Yoshihide Suga – whose priority was "res-

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<sup>12</sup> The White House, *Remarks by President Trump, Vice President Pence, and Members of the Coronavirus Task Force in a Fox News Virtual Town Hall*, 24.03.2020.

<sup>13</sup> Bundesministerium für Gesundheit, *Bundesgesundheitsminister Jens Spahn gibt eine Regierungserklärung zur Bekämpfung des Coronavirus ab*, 4.03.2020; Deutsche Welle, *Merkel: Wegen Coronavirus auf Sozialkontakte weitgehend verzichten*, 12.03.2020; M. Ganslmeier, *Altmaier hofft auf schnellen Aufschwung*, «ARD-Hauptstadtstudio» 24.03.2020.

<sup>14</sup> Die Bunderregierung, *Aktuelles, Merkel auf Wirtschaftsgipfel «Diese Maßnahmen dienen allen»*, 17.11.2020.

<sup>15</sup> P. Bofinger, S. Dulien, G. Felbermayr, C. Fuest, M. Hüther, J. Südekum, B. Weder di Mauro, *Economic implications for the Covid-19 crisis in Germany and economic policy measures*, [in:] R. Baldwin, B. Weder do Mauro, *Mitigating the COVID Economic Crisis: Act Fast and Do Whatever It Takes*, «Centre for Economic Policy Research 2020», p. 171.

<sup>16</sup> R. Harding, *Japan looks to avert Covid-19 lockdowns and keep economy open*, «The Financial Times» 16.11.2020.

<sup>17</sup> D. Warren, *Can Shinzo Abe kickstart the Japanese economy?*, «Prospect» 3.06.2020.

cuing the economy” even in a greater degree. He proved himself to be an advocate of the credo: “self-support, mutual support, and then public support”, referring to the issue of help in the days of the pandemic, which was reflected, for example, in the widely criticized by epidemiologists tourist discounts campaign aimed at salvaging the tourism, transportation and restaurant industries. The program did not cease to exist until January 2021 in the situation of an increased number of infections and the introduction of the state of emergency in Tokyo<sup>18</sup>.

Criticism related to the activities of the government in India and directed by Rahul Gandhi, the leader of the main opposition party, the Indian National Congress, was also characteristic. On 12 February he expressed his concern on Twitter saying that coronavirus “is an extremely serious threat to our people and our economy”. He also referred to it in the address from 13 March, adding that “the Indian economy will be destroyed if strong action is not taken”<sup>19</sup>. Activities were undertaken indeed. Ten days later, only four hours in advance, a total lockdown was announced. That resulted in a rapid wave of migration from towns to the province. Attempts were made to cope with it using police methods. Those activities were even more shocking because earlier the issue of the pandemic had not occupied the central place in the narration of the political authorities. They did not bring the expected results and did not stop the pandemic but had a significantly negative effect on the economic situation. That affected the rhetoric and behaviour of India’s government which wanted to improve “investor confidence” and “remove any obstacles which impede promotion of investment and industrial growth”<sup>20</sup>. In his first interview after the outbreak of the pandemic, prime minister Narendra Modi warded off the criticism of the government’s activities, for example, drawing a vision of an effective economic policy thanks to the reforms undertaken in the field of fiscal and agricultural policies

<sup>18</sup> S. Sugiyama, *Putting economy first, Suga hesitant to rein in Go To Travel program*, «The Japan Times» 1.12.2020; M. Takeda, *Japan’s economy not spared in 2020*, «East Asia Forum» 11.12.2020; R. Takahashi, *Suga expected to declare second emergency for Tokyo area*, «The Japan Times» 4.01.2021.

<sup>19</sup> R. Gandhi, Twitter account, [https://twitter.com/RahulGandhi/status/1238331274726486017?ref\\_src=twsrc%5Etfw%7Ctwcamp%5Etweetembed%7Ctwterm%5E1238331274726486017%7Ctwgr%5E%7Ctwcon%5Es1\\_&ref\\_url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.nationalherald-india.com%2Findia%2Frahul-gandhi-slams-modi-govt-response-to-coronavirus-says-ignoring-problem-is-non-solution](https://twitter.com/RahulGandhi/status/1238331274726486017?ref_src=twsrc%5Etfw%7Ctwcamp%5Etweetembed%7Ctwterm%5E1238331274726486017%7Ctwgr%5E%7Ctwcon%5Es1_&ref_url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.nationalherald-india.com%2Findia%2Frahul-gandhi-slams-modi-govt-response-to-coronavirus-says-ignoring-problem-is-non-solution) (30.11.2020).

<sup>20</sup> N.R. Musahar, *India’s Starvation Measures*, «New Left Review» March–April 2020, No. 122; A.R. Mishra, *PM Modi pushes for accelerating reforms to revive growth*, «Mint» 1.05.2020; J. Ghosh, *A critique of the Indian government’s response to the COVID-19 pandemic*, «Journal of Industrial and Business Economics» 2020, vol. 47, pp. 519–530.

and “overregulated” labour law. At the same time the hopes referring to India’s place in the world economy were clearly defined. Modi claimed:

“I am confident that these reforms undertaken in the last few months will help increase the growth rate and returns in both the manufacturing and agriculture sectors. Moreover, it will also signal to the world that this is a new India which believes in markets and market forces. (...) We saw how a new world order was formed after World War II. Something similar will happen post Covid-19. This time, India will ride the bus of manufacturing and integrating in global supply chains. (...) India is the third largest economy in terms of purchasing power parity. We want India to become the third largest in terms of current US dollar prices as well”<sup>21</sup>.

The effectiveness of dealing with the pandemic economically very quickly became an element of the official message of the Chinese authorities. In November 2020 on the forum of the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation China’s leader Xi Jinping, while pointing to the state’s involvement in further liberalization of trade and investment and the creation of “open economy” (where a critical allusion to the USA policy could not be overlooked), did not miss the chance to mention the success of the Chinese economy in the period of the pandemic: “The 1.4 billion Chinese people, united as one, have made a major strategic achievement in fighting the virus. We have endeavored to both contain the virus and speedily bring production and life back to normal, thus maintaining economic and social development. China’s economy resumed positive overall growth in the first three quarters this year. This hard-won achievement speaks volumes about the resilience and vitality of the Chinese economy. The fundamentals sustaining China’s steady and long-term economic growth remain unchanged”<sup>22</sup>.

The limited space does not make it possible to present all activities of the states directly influencing their economic life but even considering direct fiscal activities (according to the classification of the International Monetary Fund) the scale of intervention was huge. Top economic powers of the world developed rescue and stimulation packages, usually considerably exceeding the amounts assigned for this goal during the crisis of 2008–2009. Rescuing the economy and rescuing people were embodied here in an unbreakable weave.

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<sup>21</sup> P.D. Samanta, B. Ganguli, *New India believes in market forces, will be the most preferred investment destination: PM Modi*, «The Economic Times» 30.10.2020.

<sup>22</sup> Economic and Commercial Office of the Embassy of the Peoples’ Republic of China in the United States of America, *Keynote speech by Chinese President Xi Jinping at APEC CEO Dialogues*, 21.11.2020.

The United States had to do with a number of packages, totally amounting to more than \$3 trillion, which is about 14% of this state's GDP. The highest amount was included in *Coronavirus Aid, Relief and Economy Security Act* ("CARES Act"), adopted in March and assuming the expenditure of \$2.3 trillion. The largest part – \$510 billion – were credits, credit guarantees and loan securities in emergency situations from the Federal Reserve which were taken with the aim of rescuing enterprises from bankruptcy. The second position (\$349 billion) was the support for small entrepreneurs who kept places of work. It took the form of forgivable credits within the Small Business Administration (SBA), which is a federal agency. At the same time, \$293 billion was assigned for a single discount on the tax to be paid in the amount of \$1200 (\$2400 for a married couple and additional \$500 for each child) to persons who in their 2018 or 2019 tax return statement showed the income at the level up to \$75 000. Besides, \$ 268 billion was assigned to increase unemployment benefits; \$150 billion for transfers to state and local authorities; \$100 billion for hospitals; \$49.9 billion for international aid and \$25 billion for the development of food banks.

Other "aid packages" adopted in the USA in 2020 are *Families First Coronavirus Response Act*, passed in March and amounting to \$192 billion, which together with *Coronavirus Preparedness and Response Supplemental Appropriations Act* (\$8.3 billion) passed in September designated the money, for example for a two-week sick leave and a maximum of three months' holiday for the infected in urgent cases (with 2/3 salary); *the Paycheck Protection Program and Health Care Enhancement Act*, passed in August and amounting to \$483 billion (\$321 billion of which meant for additional forgivable loans and credit guarantees for small entrepreneurs who kept work places within the frameworks of SBA), and the ordinances from August on designating \$44 billion from the Disaster Relief Fund<sup>23</sup>.

In China the fiscal funds assigned for such purposes as increased expenditures on epidemic prevention and control, production of medical equipment, faster payments for the unemployed, which were also extended onto migration workers, tax reliefs, exemption from social security insurance contributions and additional public investments amounted to approx. 4.8 trillion renminbi (RMB), i.e. approx. 4.7% of the Chinese GDP. Public support was also increased with non-budget funds. This mainly concerned additional guarantees for the sector of small

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<sup>23</sup> International Monetary Fund, *Policy Responses to Covid-19*, <https://www.imf.org/en/Topics/imf-and-covid19/Policy-Responses-to-COVID-19#U> (18.11.2020).

and medium-size companies (approx. RMB 400 billion, 0.4% GDP) and reduced charges and tariffs for using the roads, ports and electrical energy (approx. 900 billion, 0.9% GDP). Obviously, non-fiscal activities were also undertaken, mainly in the form of credit, credit securities and reduction of interests. The highest value was extending the possibility of repeated loans and discounts by RMB 1.8 trillion with the aim of supporting the producers of medical products and basic commodities, micro-, small and medium-size companies as well as the agricultural sector (0.8 trillion of which was withdrawn at the end of June 2020)<sup>24</sup>. Nevertheless, the total worth of the support was significantly lower than in the USA – not only in absolute numbers but also relatively.

Among the largest economies of the world, record stimulation packages were introduced in the pandemic times by Japan. The Emergency Economic Package Against COVID-19 adopted by the government in April 2020 amounted to 117.1 trillion yens, i.e. 21.1% of GDP in Japan from 2019. That package introduced the elements of the earlier stimulation package (passed in January 2020) which had not been implemented yet, and of two other anti-Covid packages announced in February and March. According to the information of IMF, the greatest share in this amount (about 16% of GDP) were the funds designated for the “protection of employment and business”. In June the government of Japan introduced a correction to the budget expenditures connected with another 117.1 trillion yens worth of support. It referred to the issues related to health protection, support for business, households, transfers to local governments and an increased Covid reserve fund. The total percentage of various forms of fiscal aid from the state in the context of the pandemic exceeded then the enormous amount of 42% of Japanese GDP<sup>25</sup>.

The federal government in Germany adopted twice the programs of additional budget funds which were supposed to limit the crisis associated with the pandemic – in March (the amount of Euro 156 billion, i.e. 4.9% of GDP), and in June (Euro 130 billion, i.e. 4% of GDP). For the first time that amount was assigned for such goals as health protection and research on the vaccine, extended access to *Kurzarbeit* benefit (i.e. shorter working time with governmental supplements – covering 60–80% with additional 7% for people bringing up children – up to hours not worked), increased benefits for childcare in case of parents with low incomes, and better access to the basic income for the self-

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<sup>24</sup> Ibidem. The data do not comprise Hong Kong and Macao, where separate programs were introduced.

<sup>25</sup> Ibidem.

employed, subsidies (totally, Euro 50 billion) for small entrepreneurs and self-employed persons who were seriously affected by the pandemic (in addition to interest-free deferment of tax till the end of the year, and Euro 2 billion financing the increased risk capital for start-ups) as well as a temporarily extended time of the payment of unemployment and parental benefits. The June package included a temporary reduction of VAT, income support for families, subsidies for small and medium-size enterprises, support for local governments, extended credit guarantees for exporters and the banks financing the former and subsidies/investments in “green energy” and digitalization. In August the maximum period of paying benefits within *Kurzarbeit* was extended. It deserves to be mentioned that besides the federal program there were also supportive activities on the level of particular lands and local governments, which totally amounted to Euro 141 billion of direct aid and Euro 70 billion of credit guarantees.

Through the newly established economic stabilization fund (WSF) and the public bank of development (KfW), the government also extended guarantees for companies of different sizes, credit insurers and non-profit institutions for the total amount of Euro 757 billion (24% of GDP). WSF and KfW were also authorized to provide support to the companies of strategic importance<sup>26</sup>.

The authorities in India introduced two simulation packages: in May, amounting to 20 trillion rupees (approx. \$260 billion), i.e. about 10% of the Indian GDP, and in November, when additional 9 trillion was announced, thus raising the value of aid to about 15% of GDP<sup>27</sup>. The fiscal aid was, however, only a part of it. The funds classified by IMF as above the line amounted to about 3.2% of GDP (2.5% of which in the current financial year) referring to governmental expenditures, approx. 0.3% of deferred or forgiven payments and about 0.3% of GDP of accelerated expenditures, whereas the funds below the line, designated to support entrepreneurs and increase the crediting of definite sectors amounted to approx. 5.2% of GDP. The total value of those funds was then about 9% of GDP<sup>28</sup>.

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<sup>26</sup> Ibidem; L. Pratt, *German government extends Covid-19 pay scheme*, “employee benefits”, 28.09.2020.

<sup>27</sup> A. Chauchan, *Who said India’s Covid stimulus package is way less than others*, «The Economic Times» 20.05.2020; KPMG, *India, Government and institution measures in response to COVID-19*, <https://home.kpmg/xx/en/home/insights/2020/04/india-government-and-institution-measures-in-response-to-covid.html> (28.10.2020).

<sup>28</sup> International Monetary Fund, *Policy Responses...*

## **Class and intraclass conflicts**

The United States, which is the largest economy of the world and the leader in pandemic deaths, was an excellent example of the effect of class and intraclass conflicts on the activities of the state faced with the pandemic. In April 2020 a social movement against lockdown developed there and it was based on the dissatisfaction of small owners and directed under the mixture of conservative, nationalist and libertarian ideas linked with conspiracy theories concerning the new coronavirus. The movement could count on the president's support. A significant role was played here by the wish to strengthen the ideological message among his own voters as well as to direct dissatisfaction onto the states' level of political power – especially in the states run by the opposition. During the ongoing demonstrations, the president, in a series of posts placed on the Twitter social networking service, urged against lockdown and demanded “liberation” of the states of Michigan, Minnesota and Virginia (governed by the opposition of Democrats). He referred to the participants in the protests as “very fine people”, who “want their life back” as it had been “taken away from them”<sup>29</sup>.

Let us add that in the USA protests of different character also took place. There were counter-protests of health care workers during the action against lockdown. A movement of university workers and students appeared, too, in September 2020 against these institutions returning to normal activity as, according to the protesters, that would endanger their health and life<sup>30</sup>.

Let us also emphasize that it was not only Trump's unwillingness to isolate himself from his own supporters from the provincial middle class and his willingness to express their rebellion against the “elites” that influenced the president's policy in this respect. Divisions to some extent also concerned the “elites” themselves. This was expressed for example in the opinion of the former chief executive of Goldman Sachs Lloyd Blankfein, who wrote on Twitter during the March lockdown that “crushing the economy, jobs and morale is also a health issue-and beyond”, suggesting that “within a very few weeks let those with a lower risk to the disease return to work”. Also Andrew M. Cuomo, the Democratic gover-

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<sup>29</sup> D. Sevastopoulo, K. Shubber, *Trump cheers as anti-lockdown protests spread*, «Financial Times» 20.04.2020.

<sup>30</sup> BBC News, *Coronavirus lockdown protest: What's behind the US demonstrations?*, 21.04.2020; E. Marris, *US university workers fight a return to campus as COVID-19 cases grow*, «Nature» 4.09.2020 (with supplements 8.09.2020).

nor of the pandemic afflicted New York who was in conflict with Trump, emphatically stated that “you can’t stop the economy forever”<sup>31</sup>. All those conflicts strongly affected the contradicting activities of Trump’s administration, and even more the president’s statements, with permanent resentment towards activities striking business interests in a short term. In one of the addresses, which characteristically linked praising the new vaccination, American economic achievements and criticism of the opposition, the president said: “this administration will not go, under any circumstances – will not go to a lockdown”<sup>32</sup>.

The importance of the interaction between social movements reflecting different class aspirations and the coherence (or a lack of it) of the political power on the other becomes even more visible when we compare the American example with the German and Japanese ones. In Germany protests against pandemic restrictions also took place and they were of similar ideological, political and social character to those in America. The largest gathered even several thousand participants. Those protests were a platform for a number of extremely rightist groups, including the largest of them, namely Alternative for Germany (AfD), which has its own parliamentary representation. However, it did not find support from other significant political forces in Germany and it was not able to become a factor influencing the activities of the German political authorities<sup>33</sup>. In Japan protests against the pandemic restrictions were considerably smaller and the restrictions themselves were generally observed. Nevertheless, there were some cases when bar and restaurant owners did not obey them. Prime minister Suga – regardless of his pro-business inclinations – announced the possibility of imposing punishments on them (and on protest participants), which – so far – had been prohibited by the Japanese law<sup>34</sup>.

In this context the Chinese case is interesting. After weeks of limited information on the new coronavirus, there was a twist to “desperate,

<sup>31</sup> J. Tankersley, M. Haberman, R.C. Rabin, *Trump Considers Reopening Economy, Over Health Experts’ Objections*, «The New York Times» 23.03.2020 (supplemented on 6.05.2020).

<sup>32</sup> The White House, *Remarks by President Trump During an Update on Operation Warp Speed*, 13.11.2020.

<sup>33</sup> U.M. Vieten, *The “New Normal” and “Pandemic Populism” the COVID-19 Crisis and the Anti-Hygienic Mobilisation of the Far Right*, “social sciences”, 22.09.2020, pp. 8–11; J. Guhl, ‘Crisis and a Loss of Control’ – *Digital Extremism in German-Speaking Countries During the COVID-19 Crisis*, «Global Network on Extremism&Technology» 17.12.2020.

<sup>34</sup> R. Harding, *ibidem*; Ph. Patrick, *Why lockdown scepticism is growing in Japan*, «The Spectator» 4.12.2020; Bloomberg, *How Tokyo’s second State of Emergency is different from other countries’ lockdowns*, «The Indian Express» 6.01.2021.

aggressive measures” which are “mirror reflections of extreme cases of counterinsurgency, most clearly recalling the actions of military-colonial occupation in places like Algeria, or, more recently, Palestine”, as it was expressed by socialist dissidents from the Chinese collective Chuang in a text bearing a very expressive title *Social Infection. Microbiological class struggle in China*. But in this case these activities are undertaken in “mega-cities” concentrating a significant part of the world population. The authors pointed to a lack of effective structures of management in the state’s center, which is reflected on the local level and in the necessity of basing upon appeals to the local officials and the population and on *post factum* punishments (presented within the frameworks of combating corruption). The central authorities had a chance to focus only on the Hubei province, which was the epicenter of the events, with chaotic activities undertaken by local authorities of other provinces competing with each other in the severity of the measures undertaken. According to the authors, they actually reflected serious incompetence of the state contrary to the Chinese propaganda describing the repressions as an effective intervention in a crisis situation, as well as contrary to the western propaganda, which viewed them as another example of “totalitarian overreach on the part of the dystopian Chinese state”<sup>35</sup>. About 300,000 inhabitants of Wuhan left the city within eight hours between the decision on closing it on 23 January 2020 was announced and the moment when public transport was stopped. Totally, since the official confirmation of the appearance of the new virus till the closing of the city Wuhan was left by approx. 7 million people<sup>36</sup>. This will not change the fact that the specific form of the conflict between the competing local authorities and the simultaneous ability to implement panicky and strict anti-pandemic restrictions paradoxically led of a relative effectiveness in curbing the pandemic, with this relative success being used for the state’s propaganda also to support the coherence of the ruling class and to discourage from undermining their activities. *People’s Daily*, an official newspaper of the Communist Party of China, reported as early as at the beginning of March 2020 that “China’s battle against the epidemic showed that the CCP, as China’s ruling party, is by far the political party with the strongest governance capability in human history”, at the same

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<sup>35</sup> Chuang, *Social contagion. Microbiological class war in China*, <http://chuangcn.org/2020/02/social-contagion/> (02.08.2020).

<sup>36</sup> B. Xiang, N. Nyberg Sørensen, *Shock Mobility. Long-term impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic and lock-down*, «Danish Institute for International Studies Policy Brief» August 2020; F. Gaub, L. Boswinkel, *WHO’S FIRST WINS?...*, pp. 6–7.

time pointing out that Europe acts “too little and too late, and largely failing to stem the tide”<sup>37</sup>.

The situation concerning this issue looked different in India, where police methods introduced in March 2020 failed, both due to the fact that they were initially based almost exclusively on centrally coordinated lockdown comprising 1.3 billion people (e.g. without monitored contacts used in China) and structural differences of the Indian and Chinese types of capitalism – from the political structure (relative independence of the states) to the composition of the working class. In India as many as 95% workers are employed in the informal sector. After the government announced lockdown on 24 March, about seven and a half million people set off from towns to the country, frequently marching for many days. Significantly, market reforms undertaken by Modi’s government still in the context of the pre-pandemic economic slowdown and implemented in 2020 led to a wave of mass protests. On 26 November a one-day general strike took place which was announced by ten trade union centers. According to the organizers, that was the biggest strike in history considering the number of participants the number of whom was estimated at 250 million. The major postulates included departing from liberalizing changes, for example, in labour law. One of the postulates was to secure 10 kg of free-of-charge rice monthly for each person in need. A similar number of participants was gathered by an earlier general strike announced on 8 January 2020. What is significant, however, the November strike was joined by large numbers of farmers who protested against the new laws passed in September 2020 which liberalized the market of agricultural produce. Blockades and other forms of protest, at times gathering even hundreds of thousands of farmers went on for successive weeks. At the moment the present paper is being written, it is impossible to estimate the effectiveness of those protests and their possible influence on the Indian policy but without any doubt they became its important factor at the turn of 2020 and 2021<sup>38</sup>.

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<sup>37</sup> F. Gaub, L. Boswinkel, *WHO’S FIRST WINS?...*, p. 1.

<sup>38</sup> B. Xiang, N. Nyberg Sørensen, *ibidem*; K.R. Shyam Sundar, *Dynamics of General Strikes in India*, «Economic and Political Weekly» 19.01.2019, Vol. 54, Issue No. 3 (updated 30.04.2020); The Hindu Nest Desk, *Bharat bandh January 8 2020 | As it happened*, «The Hindu» 8.01.2020; Newsclick report, *Shutdown Across Sectors, as Over 25 Crore Workers Join One of the Biggest Strikes Ever*, “Newsclick”; Firstpost staff, *Nationwide general strike on 26 November to see participation of 25 crore workers*, “Firstpost”; A. S. Mahajan, *What agitating farmers want, and why the Centre may not oblige*, «India Today» 30.11.2020 (updated 1.12.2020).

## Geopolitical rivalry

A worthwhile example of the relation between this rivalry and intra-class conflicts is Germany and the policy of this country within the frameworks of the European Union<sup>39</sup>.

The German, like Chinese, economy is characterized by a meaningful direction towards export. At the same time the economic policy of the largest EU economy was for years determined by strong attachment to budget discipline and the associated policy of savings. This was directly reflected in the approach of the European Union during the crisis after 2008, an emphatic example of which were strict savings programs realized in Greece. Paul Krugman, a well-known economist placed within the post-Keynesian tradition, wrote in this context about Germany's "ruinous obsession" which was supposed to be a problem for the whole world<sup>40</sup>. In this respect the crisis connected with the pandemic caused a certain shift among the German political and economic establishment, which seemed to follow mainly from the willingness to preserve the coherence of EU, which was of colossal importance to the German economy. At the turn of March and April 2020 Germany supported a group of countries opposing the emission of the so-called "corona bonds", that is the EU-wide bonds the emission of which was urged mainly by the states of the south of the Union, most afflicted with the pandemic. That crisis was, however, overcome at the end of May by the establishment of "the temporary instrument designed to boost the recovery" under the name *NextGenerationEU*, placed outside the EU budget and amounting to Euro 750 billion, which was to obtain funds on the capital market (it was formally accepted at the summit of the European Council in July)<sup>41</sup>.

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<sup>39</sup> Let us add that the activities by EU, especially at the first stage of the pandemic, were criticized by some member states. For example, Maurizio Massari, Permanent Representative of Italy at EU, openly expressed his regret connected with insufficient common activities by EU in the face of the pandemic and no help given even to the most affected countries. When Italy applied for additional supplies of medical equipment (including face masks), Germany and France, among others, imposed export limits on such equipment. On the other hand, China submitted an offer to sell it (although with much overstated prices). See: M. Massari, *Italian ambassador to the EU: Italy needs Europe's help*, «Politico» 10.03.2020; E. Cohen, F. Musmar, *Coronavirus Reveals the Lack of Unity at the EU and the UN*, [in:] E. Karsh (ed.), *The COVID-19 Crisis: Impact and Implications*, Begin-Sadat Center for Strategic Studies 1.07.2020, pp. 157–159.

<sup>40</sup> J. de Weck, *Germany Is Finally Ready to Spend*, «Foreign Policy» 22.06.2020.

<sup>41</sup> The key part of *NextGenerationEU* is to be the Instrument of the Recovery and Resilience Facility (RRF), amounting to Euro 672.5 billion (360 billion of which are the loans, and 312 grants). See: European Commission, *Europe's moment: Repair and prepare*

Paradoxically, this partial about-turn performed by Merkel was connected with the visible conflict within the German ruling class expressed in the sentence of the Federal Constitutional Court in Karlsruhe from 5 May 2020, which questioned the legality of the program of the purchase of the assets of the public sector (PSPP) realized since 2015 by the European Central Bank (ECB). The program enabled the central banks of the Euro zone and ECB to make on the secondary market unconditional purchase of treasury bonds denominated in Euro by the governments of the Euro zone countries. This sentence, which questioned the earlier decision of the European Court of Justice, actually threatened with the financial mechanism of support of the Euro zone countries by ECB. In that context an agreement was made (first by Germany and France, and next the whole EU), which was a breakthrough in the sense that an element of the general Union financial liability *NextGenerationEU* appeared, although it needs to be emphasized that on the scale of the EU economy the amounts included in this mechanism is hardly comparable with the stimulation programs undertaken on the level of key economies of national states<sup>42</sup>.

The stake of the controversies taking place in Germany was very well expressed by Wolfgang Ischinger, Chairman of the Munich Security Conference, who wrote that “Germany is facing a crucial decision” and pointed to the necessity of adopting what in May 2020 the German minister of foreign affairs Heiko Maas called “the European Imperative”<sup>43</sup>. Not only did Ischinger remind that Germany had significant benefits from the functioning of the EU common market (and would bear even larger costs from its breakdown) but he also appealed to relearn “the language of power” of the Union in the global respect and in relation to “German leadership based on the European Imperative” in the Union itself<sup>44</sup>. This vision can be better understood if we link it with the inten-

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*for the next generation*, Press Release, 27.05.2020; European Commission, *Recovery Plan for Europe*, [https://ec.europa.eu/info/strategy/recovery-plan-europe\\_en#nextgenerationeu,%20dost%C4%99p:%208.%2012.%202020](https://ec.europa.eu/info/strategy/recovery-plan-europe_en#nextgenerationeu,%20dost%C4%99p:%208.%2012.%202020) (8.12.2020).

<sup>42</sup> K. Marchewka-Bartkowiak, *Konsekwencje finansowe i gospodarcze wyroku Federalnego Trybunału Konstytucyjnego RFN w przedmiocie pierwszeństwa prawa UE*, «Zeszyty Prawnicze BAS» 2020, No. 3, pp. 149–154; A. Viterbo, *The PSPP Judgment of the German Federal Constitutional Court: Throwing Sand in the Wheels of the European Central Bank*, «European Papers» 2020, Vol. 5, No. 1, pp. 671–685; J. Hackenbroich, *How Germany’s Constitutional Court jump-started the Franco-German engine*, «European Council on Foreign Relations» 22.05.2020.

<sup>43</sup> W. Ischinger, *Germany’s European Imperative*, «Horizons: Journal of International Relations and Sustainable Development» Autumn 2020, No. 17, p. 248.

<sup>44</sup> As indicated by Ischinger, in the years 2014–2018 presence in common market increased Germany’s real income by nearly Euro 120 billion, while Germany’s annual contribution

tions to change the anti-trust regulations within EU in such a way that they will enable the establishment of mega-corporations that could compete on the world market even if they had the dominating position in the EU internal market. When Angela Merkel spoke about this issue at a joint conference with the French president Emmanuel Macron in May 2020, she stated that there was a need to think about the creation of "European champions". She added that "the United States of America, South Korea, Japan or China, have relied very heavily on global champions" and hence the proposed approach was "the necessary answer"<sup>45</sup>.

Generally, the pandemic has proved again that the essence of capitalist states can be understood only by viewing them in plural. Since the beginning we had to do with a kind of "propaganda war" concerning both the effectiveness of dealing with the pandemic in one's own country and the management on the international level. This mainly referred to the USA and China. There were many fronts of this "war", beginning with responsibility for the very appearance of the virus. In March 2020 the spokesman of the ministry of foreign affairs of the People's Republic of China (PRC) expressed the view that "it might be US army who brought the epidemic to Wuhan"<sup>46</sup>. Although the Chinese ambassador in the USA cut himself off from any conspiracy theories referring to the origin of the virus (what could be regarded as the official standpoint of the authorities of PRC), this did not change the popularity of this belief in social media, especially in China itself<sup>47</sup>. On the other hand, the president of the USA, who for the first time publicly used the words "Chinese virus" on 16 March and has repeated them many time since then, demanded that China be held accountable for the pandemic – at the same time saying that the World Health Organization is an institution "virtually controlled by China"<sup>48</sup>.

It should be added that the rivalry between the states, which often took caricatural forms, was far from being limited to only two major economic powers. The European allies of the USA expressed disapproval of the fact that the United States acquired medical equipment by offer-

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to the Union budget was at that time Euro 10–15 billion. He also added, referring to the study by the Institute of World Economy in Kiel, that the consequence of the breakup of EU would be the decrease of the German GDP by Euro 173 billion. W. Ischinger, *ibidem*.

<sup>45</sup> B. Moens, P. Tamma, *Macron and Merkel defy Brussels with push for industrial champions*, «Politico» 18.05.2020.

<sup>46</sup> L. Winter, *Chinese Officials Blame US Army for Coronavirus*, «The Scientist» 13.03.2020.

<sup>47</sup> R. DiResta, *For China, the 'USA Virus' Is a Geopolitical Ploy*, «The Atlantic» 11.04.2020.

<sup>48</sup> The White House, *Remarks by President Trump to the 75th Session of the United Nations General Assembly*, 22.09.2020.

ing the prices much above their market value and blocking the supplies meant for those who had already signed contracts. To give an example, 200 thousand face masks for the American concern 3M (produced in China), which were intended for the German police, were directed to the USA – after being transferred between the planes in Thailand – which the Berlin authorities called “modern piracy”<sup>49</sup>.

We also had to do with the phenomenon that could be called “vaccination geo-politics”, where the competing countries tried to show their leadership both by demonstrating their technological advancement and the readiness to support other parts of the world which were deprived of vaccines. In the USA Trump announced “Operation Warp Speed” to develop work on COVID-19 vaccine although the designed fast path aroused controversies among both scientists and doctors<sup>50</sup>. “The fast path” was also used in testing the vaccines in China. The appearance of this specific dimension of competition is not difficult to explain considering that in September 2020 – according to the Oxfam International report – the political authorities of the Western world societies, constituting about 13% of the world population, ordered approximately 51% of the future vaccines (including the Chinese and the Russian ones)<sup>51</sup>. In this context, the authorities of China, where at the end of 2020 various companies and private as well as state institutions were advanced in the work on at least five different vaccines, promised to share them with the countries of Africa and South-Eastern Asia<sup>52</sup>. The same spirit was expressed by president Vladimir Putin in November 2020, saying that “vaccines are and must be a common public domain” and “Russia is ready to secure vaccines developed by our scientists for the needy countries”<sup>53</sup>. India also undertook work on its own vaccines. The companies doing research on two preparations were visited by prime minister Modi in person, who took up the subject of vaccination in his speech

<sup>49</sup> E. Cohen, F. Musmar, *Coronavirus...*, p. 158.

<sup>50</sup> S. Mallapaty, H. Ledford, *COVID-vaccine results are on the way – and scientists’ concerns are growing*, 25.09.2020, «Nature» 2020, No. 586, pp. 16–17.

<sup>51</sup> Oxfam International, *Small group of rich nations have bought up more than half the future supply of leading COVID-19 vaccine contenders*, <https://www.oxfam.org/en/press-releases/small-group-rich-nations-have-bought-more-half-future-supply-leading-covid-19> (17.09.2020).

<sup>52</sup> A. Tooze, *The World Is Winning – and Losing – the Vaccine Race*, «Foreign Policy» 19.09.2020; A. Taylor, *China’s COVID vaccines are already being distributed. But how do they work, and where are they up to in trials?*, «The Conversation» 9.12.2020; A. Ng, *Developing nations are first in line for China’s Covid vaccines. Analysts question Beijing’s intent*, «CNBC» 9.12.2020; N. Edwards, *Vaccine Diplomacy: China and SinoPharm in Africa*, «Council of Foreign Relations» 6.01.2021.

<sup>53</sup> President of Russia, G20 Summit, <http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/64460> (21.11.2020).

on the 75<sup>th</sup> session of UN on 26 September 2020. Besides referring to the threads connected with combating terrorism and the necessity of including India within the UN decision-making structures, he ensured “the global community” that “India’s vaccine production and delivery capacity will be used to help all humanity in fighting this crisis”, also reminding that India was the largest producer of vaccines in the world<sup>54</sup>.

Let us add that in October 2020 India and the Republic of South Africa, supported by a few other states of the Global South, made a request to the World Trade Organization to waiver from the implementation, application and enforcement of Sections 1, 4, 5, and 7 of Part II of the TRIPS Agreement, concerning intellectual property rights, in relation to prevention, containment or treatment of COVID-19. This waiver should continue until widespread vaccination was in place globally, and the majority of the world’s population developed immunity. India and RSA are the largest producers of generic medicines in the world so it is hard to consider this proposition as being motivated exclusively by the concern about the access to medicines and vaccinations. This does not change the fact that it met a clear opposition from the United States, the European Union, the United Kingdom, Canada and Norway, which decided that an extension of this access should take place according to the principle of voluntary settlements and programs<sup>55</sup>. An example was the COVAX program, concentrating, for example, international institutions, states (when this article was written, it was except the USA and Russia, among others), the private sector and non-governmental organizations, whose declared goal was to secure access to vaccination against COVID-19 to two billion people (from both high-income and low-income countries) till the end of 2021 and in a further perspective vaccinating at least 20% of the population from each state. According to the data from 8 January 2021, ordering vaccine doses within this

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<sup>54</sup> V. Rees, *First COVID-19 vaccine clinical trial approved in India*, «European Pharmaceutical Review» 30.06.2020; H. Balfour, *An overview of Indian COVID-19 vaccine supply and development*, «European Pharmaceutical Review» 18.09.2020; A. Rai (ed.), *Full text of PM Modi’s address at 75th UNGA session 2020*, «Hindustan Times» 26.09.2020; A. Pandey, *PM Modi visits Bharat Biotech Facility in Hyderabad to review Covaxin progress*, «India Today» 28.11.2020.

<sup>55</sup> World Trade Organization, Council for Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights, *WAIVER FROM CERTAIN PROVISIONS OF THE TRIPS AGREEMENT FOR THE PREVENTION, CONTAINMENT AND TREATMENT OF COVID-19, COMMUNICATION FROM INDIA AND SOUTH AFRICA*, <https://docs.wto.org/dol2fe/Pages/SS/directdoc.aspx?filename=q:/IP/C/W669.pdf&Open=True> (2.10.2020); S. Nair, *Interview: Why Covid-19 vaccines should be a global public good and not be hoarded by rich countries*, «Scroll.in» 25.11.2020; A. Danaiya Usher, *South Africa and India push for COVID-19 patents ban*, «The Lancet» 2020, Vol. 396, Issue 10265, pp. 1790–1791.

program amounted to 1.07 billion as compared to 4.19 billion ordered outside this program in relation to high-income countries, 1.24 billion in reference to medium-income countries and 0.495 billion to low-income countries<sup>56</sup>.

## Conclusions

It follows from the chart published on 18 November 2020 by Phillip Alvela, Thomas Ferguson and John C. Mallery from the Institute for New Economic Thinking (basing on the IMF data concerning the first two quarters of 2020) that principally the states which undertook more decisive measures to stop the pandemic were ultimately less affected by the economic. They write: “The worse the pandemic was allowed to get, the more the costs of dealing with it piled up, which directly impacted the overall costs to the economy. No amount of spending to bolster the economy with fiscal or monetary stimulus changed this near-straight line relationship”<sup>57</sup>. These data are consistent with an earlier analysis conducted by eleven journalists from *Financial Times* and concerning the same period. The key graphic picture of that analysis was provided with the following commentary: “Countries that were unable to control their outbreaks have tended to suffer the most economic pain”<sup>58</sup>.

There is no doubt that during the pandemic the key countries of contemporary global capitalism played the role of “an ideal collective capitalist”. Aiming at preserving their own, domestic capitalisms as competitive towards others within the world economy was inherent in their activities. The effectiveness of those undertakings varied and in the long term it is still impossible to evaluate it. Nevertheless, it seems indisputable that it was affected by the ability to enforce the strategy based on the activities curbing the spread of the pandemic even if they struck a part of the capitalist class. In other words, in order to save the competitiveness of domestic capitalism it was necessary for the state to

<sup>56</sup> S. Berkley, *COVAX Explained*, «Gavi. The Vaccine Alliance» 2.09.2020; The Duke Global Health Innovation Center, *Launch and Scale Speedometer*, Duke University, <https://launchandscalefaster.org/COVID-19> (8.01.2021).

<sup>57</sup> P. Alvela, T. Ferguson, J.C. Mallery, *To Save the Economy, Save People First*, «Institute for New Economic Thinking» 18.11.2020.

<sup>58</sup> Financial Times Visual & Data Journalism team (S. Bernard, J. Burn-Murdoch, T. Hannen, B. Haslett, C. Nevitt, J. Pong, Æ. Rininsland, A. Smith, M. Stabe, C. Tilford, A. Wiśniewska), *Covid-19: The global crisis – in data. Charts and maps show paradoxes of a pandemic that has claimed a million lives*, 18.10.2020.

resist the pressures of various fractions of “hostile brothers” of capital, while the social movements connected with it based mainly on the most desperate small businesspeople. At the same time there were differently directed movements expressing protest against different ways of laying the costs (both related to health and economy) of the pandemic and “rescuing the economy” on the workers and poorer layers of the society. The states, having means of repression, financial aid and ideological apparatus at their disposal, tried to respond to those movements and the divisions within the capitalist class could have been reflected in the divisions within the political establishment. “The ideality” of the collective capitalist was always defined in a dynamic and conflicting manner but its measure remained the same.

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