

On National Liberation

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On the Nation and the Nation-State

The historical process of the formation of nations (1), as groups of people self-identifying themselves to such communities, usually based around common culture, language, history, began in the Modern Era. Naturally, the question of why they arose during that time period arises. Not much thought is required to realise that such communities of people have already existed prior to the Modern Era and the development of capitalism, which characterises it. It is realised that people already self-identified themselves to religious communities and according to their ruler (2). It is now a question of identifying the differences, which are clear. (1) corresponds to the emergence and development of capitalism, (2) – the old feudal social order.

Because of those distinguishing features of the two we arrive at the conclusion that the character of such communities is derived from the set of social relations with, which it exists parallel to. We can go about it further and assert that this character is a *class* character and not just any class but the *ruling class*. This is obviously the case in (2) because of the way it's been defined. People quite literally identified themselves with respect to the state (the monarchy), which the class of the landed aristocracy organised to oppress them, or with the ideology (in the case – religion), which that ruling class utilised. In the (1) case it is not as obvious. It becomes obvious when we observe that the emergence of nations is a process going at the same pace as the emergence of *nation-states*. Classical historical examples of such are the British Commonwealth and France after the Revolutionary events of 1789. Not so surprisingly, both were revolutions of the *bourgeoisie* against feudalism, which is not a coincidence for the reasons already outlined above. To not limit ourselves with the French model of the nation-state, we will also mention the German model. Examples of the latter are Germany and Italy, whose emergence *as nations* was followed by their political unification as nation-states. The bourgeois character of those unifications is seen in the fact that the emerging capitalist class couldn't freely develop when territory was divided between various independent small states, the latter only slowed down such development, whose character was not local but global. The need of the bourgeoisie to unite and form a state with its own organs should also be pointed out, as the Napoleonic conquests proved that to be the case. The Napoleonic wars didn't "unite the people" as bourgeois historians might point out, no. The Napoleonic wars united the bourgeoisie to protect its own common interests as a class.

It is now that we arrive at a conclusion. The phrase nation-state, unlike purely the nation, clearly expresses the political character of the nation. The nation-state is the set of all state organs and instruments, which defend the interests of the bourgeoisie within certain national boundaries, that is, of the *national bourgeoisie*. The same way

the landed aristocracy constructed a set of oppressive hierarchies for the purpose of protecting their common interests, all culminating in the monarch, with reference to which people identified themselves, the bourgeoisie organised the nation-state. We can now certainly say that the nation and the nation-state, the two being inseparable for historical reasons, have a class character and that class is the ruling class.

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Having shown the class character of the nation, we can now draw conclusions about national liberation with certainty. Before we do that, let us observe the phenomena of national liberation. The very concept of liberation implies the hitherto existence of oppression, in the current case – of national oppression, that is, the oppression of one nation by something else (not necessarily another nation). Historical materialism teaches us that oppression ultimately originates from production, yet it is not limited to mere economic oppression. Any kind of oppression must be carried out by certain productive relations, that of owner and non-owner. It is clear then that national oppression cannot be carried out by a group of non-owners, it would be impossible. It can only be carried out by the owners, that is, by the ruling class, regardless of whether it is the feudal lords or the industrial capitalists. It can of course be extended to political oppression, while of course keeping in mind the origin of oppression. Such oppression could mean, for instance, the deprivation of political rights like the right to participate in the activities carried out by the hierarchies of the state, like the army. We could point out such oppression at many places, but I will use the Balkans during Ottoman rule as an example. There the economic oppression was carried out by the Ottoman state, which we could say acted and executed the functions of a feudal class, while the political oppression was expressed in the denial of political rights to all Christians.

So ultimately the liberation of the nation is the economic liberation from a “foreign” (whatever that could mean) ruling class. Indeed, the very concept of foreign implies the existence of something familiar, domestic. Thus there is another important prerequisite for national liberation, because for it to be national, you would have to make a distinction between what is national and what is not, who is a foreigner and who is not.

In the case of the Balkans, nations didn’t yet exist, and such distinction couldn’t be made. The idea for a nation later emerged in the XVIII century under the influence of the Enlightenment, that is, under the influence of the English and French bourgeoisie, whose ideas the emerging Balkan bourgeoisie was spreading as a result of its frequent travel in Europe for the purpose of trade. Only then could such a distinction about what is foreign and what is not, be made, and it is clear as day light that such distinction originated because of the limited by the Ottoman state bourgeoisie. The propositions in the first section of this text are being once again historically confirmed.

Let us then observe the case of national liberation from a foreign bourgeoisie. Obviously, a bourgeoisie can only be considered foreign if there exists or has recently existed a domestic, a national one. One might point out the possibility of the domestic

ruling class being something less advanced, like a feudal class. To refute that, we point out what has already been mentioned or implied multiple times, that is the fact that the feudal class doesn't employ the nation as an entity, to which all classes must pledge allegiance, but rather the monarch. The nation, historically, is the product of bourgeois social relations. It is because of that, that the oppression carried out by a foreign bourgeoisie can become national oppression. There are many historical examples of such liberation movements, from which some exist today. However the reason for their existence in all cases is clear given what has been said. The reason is economic oppression, but not so much of the workers, but rather the national bourgeoisie. The national bourgeoisie is being economically oppressed, if we could even call it that, in the sense that the foreign bourgeoisie dominates over it in the market and it is because of that, that the national bourgeoisie tasks itself with the restoration of its power over the nation-state, through which it can defend itself, regardless of whether it is through economic or even military means. The national bourgeoisie utilises the nation as some mythical entity, to which people of all classes must pledge their full allegiance and give their life for.

We reach the conclusion that national liberation is one form of competition of the national bourgeoisie with the foreign. This leads us to believe that it is a weapon of the ruling class and must be opposed as a mean of class struggle of the proletariat. Every attempt of national liberation results in the empowerment and prioritisation of the national bourgeoisie over the foreign, whatever that may be. Its performance does not only not help the class struggle of the proletariat but it hurts it.