

Gramsci und die revolutionäre Tradition

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Ausgewählte Auszüge aus den Gefängnisheften

H.15, §(4). Machiavelli. Elemente der Politik. Man muß nachgerade sagen, daß als erstes gerade die ersten Elemente, die elementarsten Dinge vergessen werden; andererseits werden sie durch unendliches Wiederholen zu den Säulen der Politik und jedweder kollektiven Handlung. Erstes Element ist, daß es tatsächlich Regierte und Regierende, Führer und Geführte gibt. Die ganze Politische Wissenschaft und Kunst beruht auf dieser grundlegenden, (unter bestimmten allgemeinen Bedingungen) unverrückbaren Tatsache. Die Ursprünge dieser Tatsache sind ein Problem für sich, das für sich untersucht werden muß (zumindest wird untersucht werden können und müssen, wie man die Tatsache mildern und beseitigen kann, indem bestimmte Bedingungen verändert werden, von denen erkennbar ist, daß sie in diesem Sinn wirken), aber es bleibt die Tatsache, daß es Führer und Geführte, Regierende und Regierte gibt. Dies vorausgesetzt, wird zu sehen sein, wie man auf die wirksamste Weise führen kann (bestimmte Ziele vorausgesetzt) und wie deshalb die Führer in der besten Weise vorzubereiten sind (und darin besteht genauer die erste Abteilung der Politischen Wissenschaft und Kunst), und wie man auf der anderen Seite die Linien des geringsten Widerstands oder rationalen Linien erkennt, um den Gehorsam der Geführten oder Regierten zu erlangen. Bei der Heranbildung der Führer ist die Voraussetzung wesentlich: will man, daß es immer Regierte und Regierende gibt, oder will man die Bedingungen schaffen, unter denen die Notwendigkeit der Existenz dieser Teilung verschwindet? das heißt, geht man von der Voraussetzung der fortwährenden Teilung des Menschengeschlechts aus oder glaubt man, daß sie nur eine geschichtliche, bestimmten Bedingungen entsprechende Tatsache ist? Man muß sich dennoch darüber im klaren sein, daß die Teilung in Regierte und Regierende, wenn sie in letzter Instanz auch auf eine Teilung in Gesellschaftsgruppen zurückgeht, so wie die Dinge nun einmal sind, trotzdem vorhanden ist, auch innerhalb derselben Gruppe, auch wenn diese sozial homogen ist; in einem gewissen Sinn kann man sagen, daß diese Teilung ein Geschöpf der Arbeitsteilung, eine technische Tatsache ist. Über diese Koexistenz von Motiven spekulieren diejenigen, die in allem nur „Technik“, „technische“ Notwendigkeit usw. sehen, um sich nicht das Grundproblem zu stellen. (GH1, Bd.7: 1713f.)

Hegemonie, politische Gesellschaft und Zivilgesellschaft

H.6, § (88). Gendarmen-/Nachtwächterstaat, usw. Folgender Gegenstand ist zu durchdenken: ist die Auffassung des Gendarmen-/Nachtwächterstaates, usw. (außer der Spezifikation polemischer Art: Gendarm, Nachtwächter, usw.) denn nicht die Staatsauffassung, die allein die letzten „korporativ-ökonomischen“ Phasen überwindet? Wir sind noch auf dem Boden der Gleichsetzung von Staat und Regierung, einer Gleichsetzung, die gerade ein Wiederauftauchen der korporativ-ökonomischen Form ist, das heißt der Verwechslung von Zivilgesellschaft und politischer Gesellschaft, denn es ist festzuhalten, daß in den allgemeinen Staatsbegriff Elemente eingehen, die dem Begriff der Zivilgesellschaft zuzuschreiben sind (in dem Sinne, könnte man sagen, daß Staat = politische Gesellschaft + Zivilgesellschaft, das heißt Hegemonie, gepanzert mit Zwang). In einer Staatslehre, die diesen als tendenziell dem Erlöschen und der Auflösung in der regulierten Gesellschaft unterworfen begreift, ist das Thema fundamental. Das Element Staat-Zwang kann man sich in dem Maße als erlöschend vorstellen, wie sich immer beträchtlichere Elemente von regulierter Gesellschaft (oder ethischem Staat oder Zivilgesellschaft) durchsetzen. Die Ausdrücke ethischer Staat oder Zivilgesellschaft würden bedeuten, daß dieses „Bild“ von Staat ohne Staat den bedeutendsten Politik und Rechtswissenschaftlern vorschwebte, sofern sie sich auf den Boden der reinen Wissenschaft stellten (= reine Utopie, insofern sie auf der Voraussetzung beruhte, daß alle Menschen wirklich gleich und folglich in gleicher Weise vernünftig und moralisch sind, das heißt fähig, das Gesetz spontan, frei anzuerkennen, und nicht durch Zwang, als von einer andern Klasse auferlegt, als dem Bewußtsein äußere Sache.) Es muß daran erinnert werden, daß der Ausdruck Nachtwächter für den liberalen Staat von Lassalle stammt, das heißt von einem dogmatischen und nicht dialektischen Etatisten. (...) In der Staatslehre regulierte Gesellschaft wird man von einer Phase, in der Staat gleich Regierung sein und Staat mit Zivilgesellschaft gleichgesetzt werden wird, zu einer Phase des Nachtwächterstaates übergehen, das heißt einer Zwangsorganisation, welche die Entwicklung der in ständiger Zunahme begriffenen Elemente regulierter Gesellschaft

schützen wird, daher auch stufenweise seine autoritären und zwangsmäßigen Eingriffe reduzierend. Das kann auch nicht an einen neuen „Liberalismus“ denken lassen, obwohl es der Anfang einer Ära organischer Freiheit sein will.

(GH, Bd.4: 783)

Heft 1, § (44). Politische Führung durch eine Klasse vor und nach Regierungsantritt. (...) Das historisch-politische Kriterium, das den eigentlichen Untersuchungen zugrunde gelegt werden muß, ist folgendes: daß eine Klasse auf zweierlei Weise herrschend ist, nämlich „führend“ und „herrschend“. Sie ist führend gegenüber den verbündeten Klassen und herrschend gegenüber den gegnerischen Klassen. Deswegen kann eine Klasse bereits bevor sie an die Macht kommt „führend“ sein (und muß es sein): wenn sie an der Macht ist, wird sie herrschend, bleibt aber auch weiterhin „führend“. (...) Die politische Führung wird zu einem Aspekt der Herrschaft, insofern die Absorption der Eliten der feindlichen Klassen zur Entthronung derselben und zu ihrer Machtlosigkeit führt. Es kann und es muß eine „politische Hegemonie“ auch vor dem Regierungsantritt geben, und man darf nicht nur auf die durch ihn verliehene Macht und die materielle Stärke zählen, um die politische Führung oder Hegemonie auszuüben. (...) Es erweist sich hier die Wahrheit eines Grundsatzes historisch-politischer Forschung: es gibt keine unabhängige Klasse von Intellektuellen, sondern jede Klasse hat ihre Intellektuellen; aber die Intellektuellen der historisch progressiven Klasse üben eine solche Anziehungskraft aus, daß sie sich letztlich die Intellektuellen der anderen Klassen unterordnen und eine Atmosphäre der Solidarität aller Intellektuellen mit Bindungen psychologischer (Eitelkeit, usw.) und häufig kastenmäßiger (technisch-rechtlicher, korporativer) Art schaffen. (...) Wenn die herrschende Klasse ihre Funktion erschöpft hat, neigt der ideologische Block zum Zerfall, und auf die „Spontaneität“ folgt dann der „Zwang“, in immer weniger verhüllten und indirekten Formen bis hin zu regelrechten Polizeimaßnahmen und Staatsstreichen. Die Erklärung, die Antonio Labriola dafür gegeben hat, daß in Deutschland die Junker und das Kaisertum (kaiserismo) trotz der großen kapitalistischen Entwicklung an der Macht blieben, verhüllt die richtige Erklärung: das Klassenverhältnis, das durch die industrielle Entwicklung mit dem Erreichen der Grenze der bürgerlichen Hegemonie und mit dem

Umkippen der fortschrittlichen Klassensituationen entstanden ist, bringt das Bürgertum dazu, die alte Welt nicht bis zum letzten zu bekämpfen, sondern jenen Teil der Fassade stehen zu lassen, der dazu dient, seine Herrschaft zu verschleiern.

(GH, Bd.1: 101ff.)

Heft 3, § (90). Geschichte der subalternen Klassen. Die historische Vereinigung der führenden Klassen geschieht im Staat, und ihre Geschichte ist im wesentlichen die Geschichte der Staaten und der Staatengruppen. Diese Einheit muß konkret sein, also das Ergebnis der Beziehungen zwischen Staat und „Zivilgesellschaft“. Für die subalternen Klassen kommt es nicht zu einer Vereinigung: ihre Geschichte ist verwoben in die der „Zivilgesellschaft“, ist eine zerbröckelte Fraktion derselben. Untersucht werden muß: 1. die objektive Herausbildung aufgrund der Entwicklung und der Umwälzungen, die in der ökonomischen Welt eingetreten sind, ihre quantitative Verbreitung und die Herkunft aus anderen früheren Klassen; 2. ihre Zugehörigkeit zu den herrschenden politischen Formationen, passiv oder aktiv, das heißt mit dem Versuch, auf die Programme dieser Formationen mit eigenen Forderungen Einfluß zu nehmen; 3. Entstehung neuer Parteien der herrschenden Klasse, um die Kontrolle der subalternen Klassen aufrechtzuerhalten; 4. eigene Formationen der subalternen Klassen, beschränkter und partieller Art; 5. politische Formationen, welche die Selbständigkeit derselben beanspruchen, jedoch im alten Rahmen; 6. politische Formationen, welche die völlige Selbständigkeit beanspruchen usw. Die Liste dieser Phasen kann noch präzisiert werden durch Zwischenphasen oder durch die Kombination mehrerer Phasen. Der Historiker bemerkt die Entwicklungslinie zur völligen Selbständigkeit, von den ursprünglichsten Phasen an. Daher ist auch die Geschichte einer Partei dieser Klassen sehr komplex, insofern sie alle Rückwirkungen ihrer Aktivität für das gesamte Gebiet der subalternen Klassen in ihrem Zusammenhang umfassen muß: unter diesen übt eine bereits eine Hegemonie aus, und das muß man festhalten, wenn man die Entwicklungen auch aller anderen Parteien untersucht, insofern sie Elemente dieser hegemonialen Klasse oder der anderen Klassen, welche dieser Hegemonie unterliegen, einschließen. Man könnte einen Kanon historischer Forschung konstruieren, indem man die Geschichte des Bürgertums auf diese Weise untersucht (diese Bemerkungen gehen mit den Notizen über das Risorgimento zusammen): das Bürgertum hat die Macht ergriffen, indem es gegen bestimmte gesellschaftliche Kräfte kämpfte, unterstützt von bestimmten anderen Kräften; um sich im Staat zu vereinigen, mußte es die einen ausschalten und den aktiven oder passiven Konsens der anderen haben. Die Untersuchung seiner Entwicklung als subalterne

Klasse muß also nach den Phasen forschen, durch welche sie eine Selbständigkeit in Auseinandersetzung mit den künftig zu schlagenden Feinden errungen hat und die Anhängerschaft jener Kräfte errungen hat, die sie aktiv oder passiv unterstützt haben, weil sie ohne diese Anhängerschaft sich nicht im Staat hätte vereinigen können. Der Bewußtseinsgrad, zu welchem das Bürgertum in den verschiedenen Phasen gekommen war, bemißt sich genau mit diesen beiden Maßstäben und nicht nur mit dem seiner Loslösung von der Klasse, die über sie herrschte; gewöhnlich achtet man nur auf dieses und hat eine einseitige Geschichte oder versteht zuweilen nichts, wie im Fall der italienischen Geschichte von den Kommunen an: das italienische Bürgertum vermochte das Volk nicht zu vereinigen, hier liegt ein Grund seiner Niederlagen und der Unterbrechungen seiner Entwicklung: auch im Risorgimento verhinderte dieser beschränkte „Egoismus“ eine rasche und kraftvolle Revolution wie die französische. Hier ist eine der wichtigsten Fragen und der Gründe für die Schwierigkeit beim Schreiben der Geschichte der subalternen Klassen.

(GH, Bd.2, 410f.)

H.6, § (81). Hegemonie (Zivilgesellschaft) und Gewaltenteilung. Die Gewaltenteilung und die gesamte Diskussion um ihre Verwirklichung und die seit ihrem Aufkommen entstandene juristische Dogmatik sind das Resultat des Kampfes zwischen [der] Zivilgesellschaft und der politischen Gesellschaft einer bestimmten historischen Periode mit einem gewissen instabilen Gleichgewicht der Klassen, durch die Tatsache bestimmt, daß gewisse Intellektuellenkategorien (im unmittelbaren Staatsdienst, vor allem Zivil- und Militärbürokratie) noch zu sehr mit den alten herrschenden Klassen verbunden sind. Es zeigt sich also im Innern der Gesellschaft, was Croce den „ewigen Konflikt zwischen Kirche und Staat“ nennt, in dem die Kirche die Zivilgesellschaft in ihrer Gesamtheit repräsentieren soll (während sie nur ein allmählich weniger wichtiges Element derselben ist) und der Staat jeden Versuch, permanent ein bestimmtes Entwicklungsstadium, eine bestimmte Situation zu kristallisieren. In diesem Sinn kann die Kirche selbst Staat werden, und der Konflikt kann sich zwischen säkularer und sich säkularisierender Zivilgesellschaft und Staat-Kirche äußern (wenn die Kirche ein integrierender Teil des Staates, der politischen Gesellschaft geworden ist, die von einer bestimmten privilegierten Gruppe monopolisiert wird, die sich die Kirche angliedert, um ihr Monopol mit der Unterstützung desjenigen Bereichs der Zivilgesellschaft, den die Kirche repräsentiert, besser aufrechtzuerhalten). Wesentliche Bedeutung der Gewaltenteilung für den politischen und ökonomischen Liberalismus: die gesamte liberale Ideologie, mit ihren Stärken und ihren Schwächen, kann im Prinzip der Gewaltenteilung ent-

halten sein, und es zeigt sich, woraus die Schwäche des Liberalismus entspringt; es ist die Bürokratie, das heißt die Kristallisierung des Führungspersonals, das die Zwangsgewalt ausübt und das von einem bestimmten Punkt an Kaste wird. Daher die populäre Forderung nach Wählbarkeit aller Ämter, eine Forderung, die extremer Liberalismus ist und zugleich seine Auflösung (Prinzip der in Permanenz tagendenverfassunggebenden Versammlung; in den Republiken gibt die Wahl des Staatsoberhauptes auf Zeit dieser elementaren Forderung des Volkes eine illusorische Befriedigung).

Einheit des Staates bei der Unterscheidung der Gewalten: das Parlament mehr an die Zivilgesellschaft gebunden, die richterliche Gewalt zwischen Regierung und Parlament, repräsentiert die Kontinuität des geschriebenen Gesetzes (auch gegen die Regierung). Natürlich sind alle drei Gewalten auch Organe der politischen Hegemonie, doch in unterschiedlichem Ausmaß: 1. Parlament; 2. Justiz; 3. Regierung. Es ist zu bemerken, wie in der Öffentlichkeit vor allem die Unregelmäßigkeiten der Rechtspflege einen verheerenden Eindruck machen: der Hegemonieapparat ist am empfindlichsten in diesem Sektor, worauf auch die Willkürakte der Polizei und der politischen Verwaltung zurückgeführt werden können.

(GH, Bd.4: 722f.)

Heft 13, § (24) Zu den Vergleichen zwischen den Begriffen Bewegungskrieg und Stellungskrieg in der Kriegskunst und den entsprechenden Begriffen in der politischen Kunst ist an Rosas Broschüre zu erinnern, die 1919 von C. Alessandri ins Italienische übersetzt worden ist. (...) Dieselben Militärexperten, die sich, wie vorher auf den Bewegungskrieg, nun auf den Stellungskrieg festgelegt haben, behaupten sicher nicht, der vorhergehende Typus müßte von der Wissenschaft verworfen werden; aber in den Kriegen zwischen den industriell und zivil fortgeschrittensten Staaten muß eingeschätzt werden, daß er auf eine eher taktische als strategische Funktion reduziert worden ist und in derselben Position gesehen werden muß wie vorher der Belagerungskrieg im Vergleich zum Bewegungskrieg. Dieselbe Reduzierung muß in der Kunst und der Wissenschaft der Politik erfolgen, zumindest was die fortgeschrittensten Staaten angeht, wo die „Zivilgesellschaft“ eine sehr komplexe und gegenüber den katastrophenhaften „Durchbrüchen“ des unmittelbaren ökonomischen Elements (Krisen, Depressionen usw.) widerstandsfähige Struktur geworden ist; die Superstrukturen der Zivilgesellschaft sind wie das Grabensystem im modernen Krieg. Wie es in diesem geschah, daß ein heftiger Artilleriebeschuß das ganze Verteidigungssystem des Feindes zerstört zu haben schien, statt dessen aber nur die äußerliche Oberfläche zerstört hatte und im Augenblick des Angriffs und Vorstoßes die Angreifer sich einer noch wirksamen

Verteidigungslinie gegenüber fanden, so geht es in der Politik während der großen Wirtschaftskrise zu; die Angriffsgruppen organisieren sich nicht unter der Wirkung der Krise blitzschnell in Zeit und Raum, und sie bringen erst recht keinen Angriffsgeist auf; umgekehrt verlieren die Angegriffenen weder ihre Moral, noch verlassen sie die Verteidigungslinien, auch unter Trümmernicht, noch verlieren sie ihr Vertrauen in die eigene Kraft und in die eigene Zukunft. Die Dinge bleiben gewiß nicht beim alten, aber es ist sicher, daß das Element der Schnelligkeit, des beschleunigten Tempos fehlt, des definitiven Vorwärtsschreitens, wie es die Strategen des politischen Cadornismus erwarten würden. Die letzte derartige Tatsache in der Geschichte sind die Ereignisse von 1917 gewesen. Sie haben eine entscheidende Wende in der Geschichte der Kunst und Wissenschaft von der Politik dargestellt. Es geht folglich darum, „gründlich“ zu untersuchen, welches die Elemente der Zivilgesellschaft sind, die den Verteidigungssystemen im Stellungskrieg entsprechen. Es heißt absichtlich „gründlich“, weil sie untersucht worden sind, aber von oberflächlichen und banalen Standpunkten aus, wie bestimmte Vertreter der Sittengeschichte die Merkwürdigkeiten der weiblichen Mode untersuchen, oder von einem „rationalistischen“ Standpunkt aus, also in der Überzeugung, daß bestimmte Erscheinungen sofort zerstört sind, wenn sie „realistisch“ erklärt werden, als ob es abergläubische Vorstellungen des Volkes wären (die übrigens auch nicht durch ihre Erklärung zerstört werden).

(GH, Bd.7: 1587ff.)

H.7, § (16). Stellungskrieg und Bewegungs- oder Frontalkrieg. Zu prüfen ist, ob Bronsteins berühmte Theorie über die Permanenz der Bewegung nicht der politische Reflex der Theorie des Bewegungskrieges ist (...), in letzter Instanz der Reflex der allgemein-ökonomisch-kulturell-gesellschaftlichen Bedingungen eines Landes, in dem die Kader des nationalen Lebens embryonal und erschlafft sind und nicht „Schützengraben oder Festung“ werden können. In diesem Fall könnte man sagen, daß Bronstein, der als ein „Westler“ erscheint, statt dessen ein Kosmopolit war, also oberflächlich national und oberflächlich westlich oder europäisch. Iljitsch war hingegen tief national und tief europäisch. Bronstein erinnert in seinen Memoiren daran, daß ihm gesagt worden sei, daß seine Theorie sich als gut erwiesen hatte ... nach fünfzehn Jahren, und er antwortet auf das Epigramm mit einem anderen Epigramm. In Wirklichkeit war seine Theorie als solche weder fünfzehn Jahre zuvor noch fünfzehn Jahre danach gut: wie es den Dickschädeln ergeht, von denen Guicciardini spricht, traf er es im großen ganzen, das heißt, er hatte in der allgemeinsten praktischen Vorausschau recht; wie wenn man vorhersagt, ein vierjähriges Mädchen werde Mutter werden, und, wenn

sie es mit zwanzig wird, sagt, „ich hatte es vorausgesehen“, jedoch ohne zu sagen, daß man, als sie vier war, das Mädchen vergewaltigen wollte in der Gewißheit, daß sie Mutter geworden wäre. Mir scheint, Iljitsch hatte verstanden, daß es einer Wende vom Bewegungskrieg, der 1917 siegreich im Osten angewandt worden war, zum Stellungskrieg bedurfte, welcher der einzig mögliche im Westen war, wo, wie Krasnow bemerkt, die Heere in kurzer Zeit unermeßliche Mengen an Munition anhäufen konnten, wo die sozialen Kader von sich aus noch fähig waren, zu hochgewappneten Schützengraben zu werden. Dies scheint mir die Formel von der „Einheitsfront“ zu bedeuten, die der Konzeption einer einheitlichen Front der Entente unter dem einheitlichen Kommando von Foch entspricht. Nur daß Iljitsch die Zeit nicht hatte, seine Formel zu vertiefen, wobei auch zu berücksichtigen ist, daß er sie nur theoretisch vertiefen konnte, während die Hauptaufgabe national war, das heißt eine Erkundung des Terrains und eine Fixierung der Elemente von Schützengraben und Festung erforderte, die durch die Elemente der Zivilgesellschaft repräsentiert wurden, usw. Im Osten war der Staat alles, die Zivilgesellschaft war in ihren Anfängen und gallertenhaft; im Westen bestand zwischen Staat und Zivilgesellschaft ein richtiges Verhältnis, und beim Wanken des Staates gewahrte man sogleich eine robuste Struktur der Zivilgesellschaft. Der Staat war nur ein vorgeschobener Schützengraben, hinter welchem sich eine robuste Kette von Festungen und Kasematten befand; von Staat zu Staat mehr oder weniger, versteht sich, aber gerade dies verlangte eine genaue Erkundung nationaler Art.

(GH, Bd.4: 873f.)

H. 6, §155. Vergangenheit und Gegenwart. Politik und Kriegskunst. Taktik der großen Massen und unmittelbare Taktik kleiner Gruppen. Gehört zur Diskussion über Stellungen- und Bewegungskrieg, insofern sie sich in der Psychologie der großen Anführer (Strategen) und der Subalternen reflektiert. Es ist auch (wenn man so sagen kann) der Verbindungspunkt zwischen der Strategie und der Taktik, sei es in der Politik, sei es in der Kriegskunst. Die einzelnen Individuen (auch als Bestandteile großer Massen) neigen dazu, den Krieg instinktiv als „Partisanenkrieg“ oder „garibaldinischen Krieg“ wahrzunehmen (der einen Aspekt darstellt, der dem „Partisanenkrieg“ überlegen ist). In der Politik kommt es zum Fehler wegen eines ungenauen Verständnisses dessen, was der Staat ist (in integraler Bedeutung: Diktatur + Hegemonie), im Krieg gibt es einen ähnlichen Fehler, übertragen auf das feindliche Lager (Unverständnis nicht nur des eigenen Staates, sondern auch des feindlichen Staates). Der Fehler in ein oder anderen Fall hängt zusammen mit dem Partikularismus des Individuums, der Gemeinde, der Region; der zur Unterschätzung des Gegners

und seiner Kampforganisation führt.

H.13, §(14). Ein anderer festzumachender und zu entwickelnder Punkt ist derjenige der „Doppelperspektive“ im politischen Handeln und im staatlichen Leben. Verschiedene Ebenen, auf denen die Doppelperspektive auftreten kann, von den elementarsten bis zu den komplexesten, die sich aber, entsprechend der tierischen und menschlichen Doppelnatur des Machiavellischen Zentauren, theoretisch auf zwei grundlegende Ebenen reduzieren lassen, des Zwangs und des Konsenses, der Autorität und der Hegemonie, der Gewalt und der Kultur, des individuellen Moments und des universellen (der „Kirche“ und des „Staates“), der Agitation und der Propaganda, der Taktik und der Strategie usw. Manche haben die Theorie der „Doppelperspektive“ auf etwas Beschränktes, Banales reduziert, auf nichts weiteres nämlich als auf zwei Formen von „Unmittelbarkeit“, die mechanisch mit größerer oder geringerer „Nähe“ in der Zeit aufeinander folgen. Statt dessen kann es vorkommen, daß, je mehr die erste „Perspektive“ „am unmittelbarsten“, am elementarsten ist, desto „ferner“ (nicht in der Zeit, sondern als dialektisches Verhältnis), komplexer, höher die zweite sein muß, das heißt, es kann wie im menschlichen Leben vorkommen, daß ein Individuum, je mehr es die eigene unmittelbare körperliche Existenz zu verteidigen gezwungen ist, um so mehr alle komplexen und höchsten Werte der Kultur und der Menschheit verfiert und sich auf ihren Standpunkt stellt.

(GH, Bd.7: 1553f.)

Heft 13, § (18). Einige theoretische und praktische Aspekte des „Ökonomismus“.

(...) Der Ansatz der Freihandelsbewegung beruht auf einem theoretischen Irrtum, dessen praktischer Ursprung unsicher zu erkennen ist: nämlich auf der Unterscheidung von politischer Gesellschaft und Zivilgesellschaft, die aus einer methodischen Unterscheidung zu einer organischen gemacht und als solche dargestellt wird. So wird behauptet, die ökonomische Tätigkeit gehöre in die Zivilgesellschaft und der Staat dürfe nicht in ihre Regulierung eingreifen. Aber da in der Wirklichkeit der Tatsachen Zivilgesellschaft und Staat ein und dasselbe sind, ist festzuhalten, daß auch der Liberalismus eine „Regulierung“ staatlicher Natur ist, eingeführt und aufrechterhalten auf dem Wege der Gesetzgebung und des Zwanges: er ist eine Tatsache des sich der eigenen Ziele bewussten Willens und nicht der spontanen, automatischen Ausdruck der ökonomischen Tatsache. Darum ist der Liberalismus ein politisches Programm, dazu bestimmt, bei seinem Triumph das Führungspersonal eines Staates und das Wirtschaftsprogramm des Staates selbst auszuwechseln, das heißt, die Verteilung des Nationaleinkommens zu verändern. (...) Die Tatsache der Hegemonie setzt zweifellos voraus, daß den Interessen und Tendenzen der Gruppierungen, über

welche die Hegemonie ausgeübt werden soll, Rechnung getragen wird, daß sich ein gewisses Gleichgewicht des Kompromisses herausbildet, daß also die führende Gruppe Opfer korporativ-ökonomischer Art bringt, aber es besteht auch kein Zweifel, daß solche Opfer und ein solcher Kompromiß nicht das Wesentliche betreffen können, denn wenn die Hegemonie politisch-ethisch ist, dann kann sie nicht umhin, auch ökonomisch zu sein, kann nicht umhin, ihre materielle Grundlage in der entscheidenden Funktion zu haben, welche die führende Gruppe im entscheidenden Kernbereich der ökonomischen Aktivität ausübt.

(GH, Bd.7: 1566ff.)

Intellektuelle

Heft 12, § (1). Sind die Intellektuellen eine autonome und unabhängige gesellschaftliche Gruppe, oder hat jede gesellschaftliche Gruppe ihre eigene spezialisierte Kategorie von Intellektuellen? Das Problem ist komplex wegen der verschiedenen Formen, die der wirkliche geschichtliche Prozeß der Formierung der unterschiedlichen Intellektuellenkategorien bisher angenommen hat. Die beiden wichtigsten dieser Formen sind:

1. Jede gesellschaftliche Gruppe schafft sich, während sie auf dem originären Boden einer wesentlichen Funktion in der Welt der ökonomischen Produktion entsteht, zugleich organisch eine oder mehrere Schichten von Intellektuellen, die ihr Homogenität und Bewußtheit der eigenen Funktion nicht nur im ökonomischen, sondern auch im gesellschaftlichen und politischen Bereich geben: der kapitalistische Unternehmer schafft mit sich den Techniker der Industrie, den Wissenschaftler der politischen Ökonomie, den Organisator einer neuen Kultur, eines neuen Rechts usw. usf. Festzuhalten ist, daß der Unternehmer eine höhere gesellschaftliche Ausformung darstellt, die bereits durch eine gewisse leitende und technische (d.h. intellektuelle) Fähigkeit gekennzeichnet ist: er muß außer in dem begrenzten Bereich seiner Tätigkeit und seiner Initiative auch in anderen Bereichen eine gewisse technische Fähigkeit haben, zumindest in denen, die der ökonomischen Produktion am nächsten stehen (er muß ein Organisator von Menschenmassen sein, er muß ein Organisator des „Vertrauens“ der Sparer in seinen Betrieb, der Käufer seiner Ware usw. sein). (...) Es ist festzustellen, daß die „organischen“ Intellektuellen, die jede neue Klasse mit sich selbst schafft und in ihrer fortschreitenden Entwicklung heranbildet, meist „Spezialisierungen“ von Teilaspekten der ursprünglichen Tätigkeit des neuen gesellschaftlichen Typs sind, den die neue Klasse ins Licht gerückt hat. (...) So ist festzuhalten, daß die Masse der Bauern, obwohl sie eine wesentliche Funktion in der Welt der Produktion ausübt, keine eigenen „organischen“ Intellektuellen heranbildet und keine Schicht „traditioneller“ Intellektueller „assimiliert“, obwohl andere gesell-

schaftliche Gruppen viele ihrer Intellektuellen aus der Masse der Bauern holen und ein Großteil der traditionellen Intellektuellen bäuerlicher Herkunft ist).

2. Aber jede „wesentliche“ gesellschaftliche Gruppe, die aus der vorhergehenden ökonomischen Struktur und als Ausdruck einer Entwicklung derselben (dieser Struktur) in der Geschichte auftaucht, hat, zumindest im bisherigen Verlauf der Geschichte, bereits bestehende Gesellschaftskategorien vorgefunden, die geradezu als Repräsentanten einer selbst durch die komplexesten und radikalsten Veränderungen der gesellschaftlichen und politischen Formen nicht unterbrochenen geschichtlichen Kontinuität erschienen. Die typischste dieser Intellektuellenkategorien ist die der Kirchenmänner, die lange Zeit (während einer ganzen historischen Phase, die sogar durch dieses Monopol zum Teil gekennzeichnet ist) einige wichtige Dienstleistungen monopolisiert hatten: die religiöse Ideologie, das heißt die Philosophie und die Wissenschaft der Epoche, einschließlich der Schule, des Bildungswesens, der Moral, der Justiz, der Wohltätigkeit, der Fürsorge usw. Die Kategorie der Kirchenmänner kann als die organisch an die grundbesitzende Aristokratie gebundene Intellektuellenkategorie betrachtet werden: sie war juristisch der Aristokratie gleichgestellt, mit der sie sich in die Ausübung des feudalen Eigentums am Boden und in den Genuß der an das Eigentum gebundenen staatlichen Privilegien teilte. Aber das Monopol der Kirchenmänner auf die Superstrukturen (woraus in vielen Sprachen neulateinischen Ursprungs oder in den über das Kirchenlatein stark von den neulateinischen Sprachen beeinflussten, die allgemeine Bedeutung „Intellektueller“ - oder „Spezialist“ - für das Wort „Kleriker“ hervorgegangen ist, mit seinem Gegenstück „Laie“ im Sinne von weltlich - Nicht-Spezialist) ist nicht kampflös und ohne Einschränkungen ausgeübt worden, und so kam es in verschiedenen Formen (die konkret zu untersuchen und zu studieren sind) zur Entstehung weiterer Kategorien, die durch das Erstarken der Zentralgewalt des Monarchen bis hin zum Absolutismus begünstigt und in ihrem Wachstum gefördert worden sind. So bildet sich allmählich der Amtsadel mit seinen eigenen Privilegien heraus; eine Schicht von Verwaltern usw., Wissenschaftler, Theoretiker, nichtkirchliche Philosophen usw.

Da diese verschiedenen Kategorien von traditionellen Intellektuellen ihre lückelose geschichtliche Kontinuität und ihre „Qualifikation“ mit „Korpsgeist“ empfinden, positionieren sie sich selbst als autonom und unabhängig von der herrschenden gesellschaftlichen Gruppe; diese Selbstpositionierung ist nicht ohne Folgen im ideologischen und politischen Bereich, Folgen von großer Tragweite (die gesamte idealistische Philosophie kann ohne weiteres mit dieser von der gesellschaftlichen Gesamtheit der Intellektuellen angenommenen Positionie-

rung in Zusammenhang gebracht werden, und man kann sie als Ausdruck dieser gesellschaftlichen Utopie definieren, aufgrund derer die Intellektuellen sich für „unabhängig“, autonom, mit eigenständigen Merkmalen usw. ausgestattet halten. (...)

Welches sind die „äußersten“ Grenzen der Bedeutung von „Intellektueller“? Läßt sich ein einheitliches Kriterium finden, um gleichermaßen alle verschiedenen und disparaten intellektuellen Tätigkeiten zu kennzeichnen und diese gleichzeitig und in grundsätzlicher Weise von den Tätigkeiten der anderen gesellschaftlichen Gruppierungen zu unterscheiden? Der verbreitetste methodische Irrtum scheint mir der, daß dieses Unterscheidungskriterium in der Eigenart der intellektuellen Tätigkeiten gesucht worden ist statt im Ensemble des Systems von Verhältnissen, in dem sich jene (und folglich die Gruppen, die sie personifizieren) im allgemeinen Zusammenhang der gesellschaftlichen Verhältnisse befinden. Und tatsächlich ist der Arbeiter oder Proletarier zum Beispiel nicht spezifisch durch die manuelle oder instrumentelle Arbeit gekennzeichnet (abgesehen davon, daß es rein körperliche Arbeit nicht gibt und daß auch Taylors Ausdruck vom „dressierten Gorilla“ eine Metapher ist, um eine Grenze in einer bestimmten Richtung anzuzeigen: in jeglicher körperlicher Arbeit, auch der mechanischsten und degradiertesten, ist ein Minimum an technischer Qualifikation vorhanden, das heißt ein Minimum an kreativer intellektueller Tätigkeit), sondern durch diese Arbeit unter bestimmten Bedingungen und in bestimmten gesellschaftlichen Verhältnissen. Und es ist bereits bemerkt worden, daß der Unternehmer eben aufgrund seiner Funktion in einem gewissen Ausmaß eine gewisse Anzahl von Qualifikationen intellektueller Art haben muß, obwohl seine gesellschaftliche Gestalt nicht von ihnen, sondern von den allgemeinen gesellschaftlichen Verhältnissen bestimmt wird, die eben die Stellung des Unternehmers in der Industrie kennzeichnen.

Alle Menschen sind Intellektuelle, könnte man daher sagen; aber nicht alle Menschen haben in der Gesellschaft die Funktion von Intellektuellen (...) Die Beziehung zwischen den Intellektuellen und der Welt der Produktion ist nicht unmittelbar, wie das bei den grundlegenden Gesellschaftsgruppen der Fall ist, sondern ist, in unterschiedlichem Grad, durch das gesamte gesellschaftliche Gewebe, den Komplex der Superstrukturen „vermittelt“, dessen „Funktionäre“ eben die Intellektuellen sind. Man könnte die „Organizität“ der verschiedenen Intellektuellenschichten, ihre mehr oder weniger enge Verbindung mit einer grundlegenden Gesellschaftsgruppe messen, indem man eine Abstufung der Funktionen und der Superstrukturen von unten nach oben (von der strukturellen Basis nach oben) festlegt. Vorläufig lassen sich zwei große superstrukturelle „Ebenen“ festlegen - diejenige, die

man die Ebene der „Zivilgesellschaft“ nennen kann, d.h. des Ensembles der gemeinhin „privat“ genannten Organismen, und diejenige der „politischen Gesellschaft oder des Staates“ -, die der Funktion der „Hegemonie“, welche die herrschende Gruppe in der gesamten Gesellschaft ausübt, und der Funktion der „direkten Herrschaft“ oder des Kommandos, die sich im Staat und in der „formellen“ Regierung ausdrückt, entsprechen. Diese Funktionen sind eben organisierend und verbindend. Die Intellektuellen sind die „Gehilfen“ der herrschenden Gruppe bei der Ausübung der subalternen Funktionen der gesellschaftlichen Hegemonie und der politischen Regierung, nämlich: 1. des „spontanen“ Konsenses, den die großen Massen der Bevölkerung der von der herrschenden grundlegenden Gruppe geprägten Ausrichtung des gesellschaftlichen Lebens geben, eines Konsenses, der „historisch“ aus dem Prestige (und folglich aus dem Vertrauen) hervorgeht, das der herrschenden Gruppe aus ihrer Stellung und ihrer Funktion in der Welt der Produktion erwächst; 2. des staatlichen Zwangsapparats, der „legal“ die Disziplin derjenigen Gruppen gewährleistet, die weder aktiv noch passiv „zustimmen“, der aber für die gesamte Gesellschaft in der Voraussicht von Krisenmomenten im Kommando und in der Führung, in denen der spontane Konsens schwindet, eingerichtet ist. Diese Problemstellung führt im Ergebnis zu einer erheblichen Erweiterung des Begriffs des Intellektuellen, doch nur so ist es möglich, zu einer konkreten Annäherung an die Wirklichkeit zu gelangen. (...) Der zentrale Punkt der Frage bleibt die Unterscheidung zwischen Intellektuellen als organischer Kategorie jeder grundlegenden Gesellschaftsgruppe und Intellektuellen als traditioneller Kategorie; eine Unterscheidung, aus der eine ganze Reihe von Problemen und möglichen historischen Untersuchungen hervorgeht. Unter diesem Gesichtspunkt betrachtet, ist das interessanteste Problem das der modernen politischen Partei, ihrer wirklichen Ursprünge, ihrer Entwicklungen, ihrer Formen. Wie steht es mit der politischen Partei in bezug auf das Problem der Intellektuellen? Es müssen einige Unterscheidungen getroffen werden: 1. für einige gesellschaftliche Gruppen ist die politische Partei nichts anderes als ihre Art und Weise, die eigene Kategorie von organischen Intellektuellen auszuformen, die sich auf diese Weise direkt auf dem politischen und philosophischen Gebiet bilden und sich angesichts der allgemeinen Merkmale und der Bildungs-, Lebens- und Entwicklungsbedingungen der gegebenen gesellschaftlichen Gruppe auch nur hier bilden können und nicht etwa im Bereich der Produktionstechnik (im produktionstechnischen Bereich bilden sich die Schichten, die man mit den „Truppendienstgraden“ in der Armee vergleichen könnte, also die qualifizierten und spezialisierten Arbeiter in der Stadt und in komplexerer Weise die Halbpächter und

Pächter auf dem Land, da der Halbpächter und Pächter im allgemeinen eher dem Typ des Handwerkers entspricht, welcher der qualifizierte Arbeiter einer mittelalterlichen Ökonomie ist); 2. für alle Gruppen ist die politische Partei genau der Mechanismus, der in der Zivilgesellschaft dieselbe Funktion erfüllt, die der Staat in größerem Umfang und synthetischer in der politischen Gesellschaft erfüllt, das heißt, sie sorgt für das Zusammenwachsen von organischen Intellektuellen einer bestimmten Gruppe - der herrschenden - mit traditionellen Intellektuellen, und diese Funktion erfüllt die Partei eben in Abhängigkeit von ihrer Grundfunktion, die darin besteht, die eigenen Komponenten, Elemente einer gesellschaftlichen Gruppe, die als „ökonomische“ entstanden ist und sich entwickelt hat, herauszuarbeiten, bis sie zu qualifizierten politischen Intellektuellen, Führern, Organisatoren aller Aktivitäten und Funktionen werden, die zur organischen Entwicklung einer integralen zivilen und politischen Gesellschaft gehören. Man kann sogar sagen, daß die politische Partei in ihrem Umfeld ihre Funktion viel vollständiger und organischer erfüllt, als der Staat die seine in einem weiteren Umfeld erfüllt: ein Intellektueller, der sich der politischen Partei einer bestimmten gesellschaftlichen Gruppe anschließt, verschmilzt mit den organischen Intellektuellen derselben Gruppe, verbindet sich eng mit der Gruppe, was durch die Beteiligung am staatlichen Leben nur in bescheidenem Maß und manchmal überhaupt nicht geschieht. Es kommt sogar vor, daß viele Intellektuelle meinen, sie seien der Staat, ein Glaube, der angesichts der beeindruckenden Masse der Kategorie bisweilen beträchtliche Folgen hat und zu mißlichen Komplikationen für die grundlegende ökonomische Gruppe führt, die in Wirklichkeit der Staat ist.

(GH, Bd.7: 1497ff.)

Struktur, Superstruktur und geschichtlicher Block

H.10, Teil II, § (12) . Einführung ins Studium der Philosophie. Die im Vorwort von Zur Kritik der politischen Ökonomie enthaltene Aussage, daß die Menschen das Bewußtsein von den Strukturkonflikten auf dem Terrain der Ideologien erlangen, muß als eine Feststellung von erkenntnistheoretischem und nicht bloß psychologischem und moralischem Wert betrachtet werden. Daraus folgt, daß auch das praktisch-theoretische Prinzip der Hegemonie eine erkenntnistheoretische Tragweite besitzt, und daher ist auf diesem Gebiet der wichtigste theoretische Beitrag von Iljitsch zur Philosophie der Praxis zu suchen. Iljitsch hätte demnach [effektiv] die Philosophie [als Philosophie] vorangebracht, insofern er die politische Lehre und Praxis voranbrachte. Insofern die Verwirklichung eines hegemonischen Apparats ein neues ideologisches Terrain schafft, bewirkt sie eine Reform der Bewußt-

seine und der Erkenntnismethoden, ist sie eine Erkenntnistatsache, eine philosophische Tatsache. In der Sprache Croces: wenn es gelingt, eine einer neuen Weltauffassung entsprechende neue Moral einzuführen, wird schließlich auch eine solche Auffassung eingeführt, wird also eine vollständige philosophische Reform bewirkt.

(GH, Bd.6: 1264)

Heft 4, § (38). Beziehungen zwischen Struktur und Superstrukturen. Dieses Problem erscheint mir als das Schlüsselproblem des historischen Materialismus. Elemente zur Orientierung: 1. das Prinzip, daß „keine Gesellschaft sich Aufgaben stellt, für deren Lösung nicht bereits die notwendigen und zureichenden Bedingungen vorhanden sind“ [oder sie nicht im Prozeß der Entwicklung und des Erscheinens sind], und 2. daß „keine Gesellschaft untergeht, bevor sie all die Lebensformen, die in ihren Verhältnissen enthalten sind, entwickelt hat“ (die genaue Formulierung dieser Prinzipien nachsehen). Aus diesen Prinzipien lassen sich einige Regeln historischer Methodologie gewinnen. Beim Studium einer Struktur gilt es zu unterscheiden zwischen dem, was permanent ist, und dem, was gelegentlich bedingt (occasionale) ist. Das Gelegenheitsbedingte gibt Anlaß für die politische Kritik, das Permanente gibt Anlaß für die historisch-gesellschaftliche Kritik; das Gelegenheitsbedingte dient zur Beurteilung der Gruppen und der politischen Persönlichkeiten, das Permanente zur Beurteilung der großen gesellschaftlichen Gruppierungen. Beim Studium einer historischen Epoche zeigt sich die große Bedeutung dieser Unterscheidung: es existiert eine Krise, die sich manchmal über Jahrzehnte hinzieht. Das bedeutet, daß in der Struktur unheilbare Widersprüche aufgetreten sind, welche die positiv an der Erhaltung der Struktur selbst wirkenden politischen Kräfte jedoch innerhalb gewisser Grenzen zu heilen sich bemühen; diese unablässigen und beharrlichen Anstrengungen (denn keine gesellschaftliche Form wird je eingestehen wollen, daß sie überholt ist) bilden das Terrain des „Gelegentlichen“, auf dem die Kräfte sich organisieren, die zu beweisen „suchen“ (in letzter Instanz durch Tatsachen, das heißt durch den eigenen Triumph, aber unmittelbar mit der ideologischen, religiösen, philosophischen, politischen, juristischen usw. Polemik), daß „bereits die notwendigen und hinreichenden Bedingungen dafür vorhanden sind, daß bestimmte Aufgaben sich lösen lassen und folglich historisch gelöst werden müssen“. (...) Ein anderer Aspekt desselben Problems ist die sogenannte Frage der Kräfteverhältnisse. Man liest oft in diesen historischen Erzählungen den allgemeinen Ausdruck: günstiges oder ungünstiges „Kräfteverhältnis“. Derart abstrakt erklärt dieser Ausdruck nichts oder fast nichts: gewöhnlich wiederholt man die Tatsache, die erklärt werden soll, man macht eine Tautologie: der

theoretische Fehler besteht darin, einen Kanon von Forschung und Interpretation als „historische Ursache“ anzugeben. Insofern muß man bei dem Ausdruck „Kräfteverhältnis“ verschiedene Momente oder Grade unterscheiden: mir scheint, man kann drei grundlegende unterscheiden:

1. es gibt ein eng an die Struktur gebundenes Verhältnis der gesellschaftlichen Kräfte; dies ist ein objektives Verhältnis, es ist eine „naturwissenschaftliche“ Gegebenheit, die mit den Verfahren der exakten oder mathematischen Wissenschaften gemessen werden kann. Auf der Basis des Entwicklungsgrades der materiellen Produktivkräfte treten die verschiedenen gesellschaftlichen Gruppierungen auf, wobei jede derselben eine Funktion und eine Stellung in der Produktion selbst repräsentiert. Diese fundamentale Anordnung ermöglicht es, zu untersuchen, ob in der Gesellschaft die zureichenden und notwendigen Bedingungen für ihre Umgestaltung vorhanden sind; sie ermöglicht es, den Grad von Realismus und Verwirklichbarkeit der verschiedenen Ideologien zu kontrollieren, die auf ihrem eigenen Terrain entstanden sind, dem Terrain der Widersprüche, die jene (Anordnung) im Laufe ihrer Entwicklung hervorgebracht hat.

2. ein nächstes Moment ist das politische „Kräfteverhältnis“, das heißt die Einschätzung des Grades an Homogenität und Selbstbewußtsein, den die verschiedenen gesellschaftlichen Gruppierungen erreicht haben. Dieses „Moment“ kann seinerseits in unterschiedliche Momente aufgespalten werden, die den unterschiedlichen Graden des politischen Bewußtseins entsprechen, wie sie sich bisher in der Geschichte gezeigt haben. Das erste Moment, das elementarste, ist das ursprüngliche ökonomische: ein Kaufmann fühlt, daß er solidarisch mit einem anderen Kaufmann ist, ein Fabrikant mit einem anderen Fabrikanten usw., aber der Kaufmann fühlt sich noch nicht solidarisch mit dem Fabrikanten; gefühlt wird also die homogene Einheit der Berufsgruppe, aber noch nicht der gesellschaftlichen Gruppierung. Ein zweites Moment ist dasjenige, in dem das Bewußtsein der Interessensolidarität zwischen allen Mitgliedern der gesellschaftlichen Gruppierung erlangt wird, aber erst auf rein ökonomischem Gebiet. In dieser ökonomisch-politischen Phase stellt sich die Staatsfrage, jedoch auf dem Terrain der elementaren politischen Gleichheit, da das Recht eingefordert wird, bei der Verwaltung und bei der Gesetzgebung mitzuwirken und sie innerhalb der vorhandenen allgemeinen Rahmenbedingungen zu modifizieren, sie zu reformieren. Ein drittes Moment ist dasjenige, in dem das Bewußtsein erlangt wird, daß die eigenen „korporativen“ Interessen in ihrer gegenwärtigen und künftigen Entwicklung den „korporativen“ Umkreis, also den der ökonomischen Gruppierung, überschreiten und zu Interessen anderer untergeordneter Gruppierungen

werden können und müssen; dies ist die eigentlich „politische“ Phase, die den klaren Übergang von der bloßen Struktur zu den komplexen Superstrukturen bezeichnet, es ist die Phase, in der die zuvor aufgekeimten Ideologien in Kontakt kommen und in Kontrast treten, bis eine einzige von ihnen, oder zumindest eine einzige Kombination derselben, dazu tendiert, das Übergewicht zu erlangen, sich durchzusetzen, sich über das gesamte Gebiet zu verbreiten, über die ökonomische und politische Einheit hinaus auch die intellektuelle und moralische Einheit determinierend, auf einer nicht korporativen, sondern universellen Ebene der Hegemonie einer gesellschaftlichen Hauptgruppierung über die untergeordneten Gruppierungen. (...) In der wirklichen Geschichte verwickeln sich diese Momente untereinander, horizontal wie vertikal, also nach (horizontaler) ökonomischer Aktivität und nach Territorium (vertikal), indem sie sich unterschiedlich kombinieren und spalten, und jede dieser Kombinationen kann durch einen eigenen organisierten politischen und ökonomischen Ausdruck repräsentiert werden. Ferner muß man im Auge behalten, daß sich mit diesen inneren Beziehungen eines Staates-Nation die internationalen Beziehungen verflechten und dabei ihrerseits originelle und historisch konkrete Kombinationen hervorbringen. Eine Ideologie, die in einem stärker entwickelten Land entstanden ist, verbreitet sich in einem weniger entwickelten Land, das lokale Spiel der Kombinationen beeinflussend (...); dieses Verhältnis zwischen internationalen Kräften und nationalen Kräften kompliziert sich im Innern jeder Nation noch durch die häufig gegebene Existenz etlicher nationaler Territorialsegmente von unterschiedlicher Struktur und unterschiedlichem Kräfteverhältnis in allen Graden (...). 3. das dritte Moment ist das des „militärischen Kräfteverhältnisses“, das jedesmal das unmittelbar entscheidende ist. Die historische Entwicklung schwankt fortwährend zwischen dem ersten und dem dritten Moment, wobei das zweite vermittelt. Aber auch dieses dritte Moment des Kräfteverhältnisses ist nichts Ununterschiedenes und unmittelbar in schematischer Form Identifizierbares. Mir scheint, man kann zwei Momente daran unterscheiden: das „militärische“ Moment im engeren, technischen Sinn des Wortes, und das Moment, das man „politisch-militärisches“ Moment nennen kann. In der Entwicklung der Weltgeschichte und der europäischen Geschichte sind diese beiden Momente in mannigfaltigen Kombinationen aufgetreten. Ein bezeichnendes Beispiel, das als Mittel dienen kann, den Grenzfall zu demonstrieren, ist das des militärischen nationalen Unterdrückungsverhältnisses, also (das Beispiel) eines militärisch gut organisierten Staates, der Territorien anderer Nationalität unterdrückt, wobei er den Interessen seiner herrschenden gesellschaftlichen Gruppierung die gleichartigen Gruppierungen der

Nationalitäten, die er unterdrückt, unterordnet. Auch in diesem Fall ist das Verhältnis nicht rein militärisch, sondern politisch-militärisch, und die Kräfte der unterdrückten Nationalitäten dürfen nicht rein militärische sein, für den Unabhängigkeitskampf, sondern militärische und politisch-militärische. Viele Bemerkungen zu diesem Thema finden sich in den Notizen zum italienischen Risorgimento. Indessen: wenn im Falle nationaler Unterdrückung die unterdrückte Nation, um den Unabhängigkeitskampf einzuleiten, darauf warten müßte, daß der Hegemonialstaat ihr erlaubt, eine eigene militärische Kraft im engen und technischen Sinn des Wortes zu organisieren, dann müßte sie ein Weilchen warten. Die unterdrückte Nation wird folglich zunächst der militärischen Hegemonialkraft eine bloß „politisch-militärische“ Kraft entgegensetzen, das heißt Elemente politischer Aktion, die militärische Auswirkungen in folgendem Sinn haben: 1. daß sie eine [innere] auflösende Wirkung auf die Kriegstauglichkeit der hegemonialen Nation haben; 2. daß sie die militärische Hegemonialkraft zwingen, sich über ein großes Territorium zu zerstreuen und dadurch einen großen Teil der Kriegstauglichkeit zunichte zu machen (...). Eine andere Frage, die mit dem in dieser Rubrik behandelten Problem zusammenhängt, ist folgende: ob die grundlegenden historischen Fakten vom ökonomischen Mißbefinden oder vom Wohlstand bestimmt sind. (...) Kurz, die besondere Frage des Mißbefindens oder Wohlstands als Ursache wesentlicher Brüche im historischen Gleichgewicht ist ein Teilaspekt der Frage der „Kräfteverhältnisse“ verschiedener Grade. Zum Bruch kann es kommen, weil entweder eine Situation des Wohlstands bedroht ist oder weil das Mißbefinden unerträglich geworden ist und man in der alten Gesellschaft keine Kraft sieht, die es zu lindern vermöchte; deshalb kann man sagen, daß diese Elemente zu den „gelegentlichen Schwankungen“ der Situationen gehören, auf deren Terrain das gesellschaftliche Kräfteverhältnis zum politischen Kräfteverhältnis wird, um im entscheidenden militärischen Kräfteverhältnis zu kulminieren. Wenn dieser Entwicklungsprozeß von einem Moment zum anderen im Kräfteverhältnis fehlt, bleibt die Situation unbeweglich und können sich unterschiedliche Konsequenzen ergeben: der Sieg der alten Gesellschaft, die eine „Atem“-Pause gewonnen hat, indem sie die gegnerische Elite physisch zerstört und die Reserve terrorisiert, oder auch die wechselseitige Zerstörung der kämpfenden Kräfte bei Errichtung eines Kirchhoffriedens unter der Aufsicht einer fremden Wache.

(GH, Bd.3: 493ff.)

H.8. § (182). Struktur und Superstrukturen. Die Struktur und die Superstrukturen bilden einen „geschichtlichen Block“, das heißt, das komplexe und nichtübereinstimmende Ensemble der Superstrukturen ist

der Reflex des Ensembles der gesellschaftlichen Produktionsverhältnisse. Dem läßt sich entnehmen: daß nur ein Gesamtsystem von Ideologien rational den Widerspruch der Struktur widerspiegelt und die Existenz der objektiven Bedingungen für die Umwälzung der Praxis repräsentiert. Wenn sich eine aufgrund der Ideologie zu 100% homogene soziale Gruppe bildet, dann heißt dies, daß zu 100 % die Voraussetzungen dieser Umwälzung existieren, das heißt, daß das „Vernünftige“ aktiv und aktuell wirklich ist. Der Gedankengang basiert auf der notwendigen Wechselwirkung zwischen Struktur und Superstrukturen (eine Wechselwirkung, die eben der wirkliche dialektische Prozeß ist).

(GH, Bd.5:1045)

H. 10, Teil II, § (6). Einführung ins Studium der Philosophie.

I. Der Terminus „Katharsis“. Der Terminus „Katharsis“ läßt sich verwenden, um den Übergang vom bloß ökonomischen (oder leidenschaftlich-egoistischen) Moment zum ethisch-politischen Moment zu bezeichnen, das heißt die Hinaufarbeitung der Struktur zu Superstruktur im Bewußtsein der Menschen. Dies bedeutet auch den Übergang vom „Objektiven zum Subjektiven“ und von der „Notwendigkeit der Freiheit“. Von einer äußerlichen Kraft, die den Menschen erdrückt, ihn sich assimiliert, ihn passiv macht, wird die Struktur transformiert in ein Mittel der Freiheit, in ein Instrument zur Schaffung einer neuen ethisch-politischen Form, in den Ursprung neuer Initiativen. Die Fixierung des „kathartischen“ Moments wird meines Erachtens somit zum Ausgangspunkt für die gesamte Philosophie der Praxis; der kathartische Prozeß fällt zusammen mit der Kette von Synthesen, die Resultat der dialektischen Entwicklung sind (An die beiden Punkte erinnern, zwischen denen sich dieser Prozeß hin- und herbewegt: - daß keine Gesellschaft sich Aufgaben stellt, für deren Lösung nicht bereits die notwendigen und zureichenden Bedingungen vorhanden oder auf dem Weg des Erscheinens sind - und daß keine Gesellschaft untergeht, bevor sie nicht ihren gesamten potentiellen Inhalt hervorgebracht hat)

II. Subjektive Wirklichkeitsauffassung und Philosophie der Praxis. Die Philosophie der Praxis „absorbiert“ die subjektive Wirklichkeitsauffassung (den Idealismus) in der Theorie der Superstrukturen, absorbiert sie und erklärt sie historisch, das heißt, sie „hebt sie auf“, sie formt sie um zu einem ihrer „Momente“. Die Theorie der Superstrukturen ist die Übersetzung der subjektiven Wirklichkeitsauffassung in Begriffe eines realistischen Historizismus.

(GH, Bd.6: 1259)

H.11, § (17) (...) Objektivität bedeutet immer „menschlich objektiv“, was die genaue Entsprechung zu „geschichtlich subjektiv“ sein kann, objektiv würde demnach „uni-

versell subjektiv“ bedeuten. Der Mensch erkennt objektiv, insofern die Erkenntnis für die gesamte in einem einheitlichen kulturellen System geschichtlich vereinigte menschliche Gattung wirklich ist; aber dieser geschichtliche Vereinigungsprozeß erfolgt mit dem Verschwinden der inneren Widersprüche, welche die menschliche Gesellschaft zerreißen, Widersprüche, die die Bedingung für die Gruppenbildung und für die Entstehung der Ideologien sind, die nicht konkret universell sind, sondern durch den praktischen Ursprung ihrer Substanz unmittelbar hinfällig gemacht werden. Es gibt daher einen Kampf um die Objektivität (...). Was die Idealisten Geist nennen, ist nicht Ausgangspunkt, sondern Ankunftspunkt, das Ensemble der Superstrukturen im Werden, hin zur konkreteren und objektiv universellen Vereinigung und nicht etwa eine einheitliche Voraussetzung usw. (...) (W)enn man behauptet, daß eine Realität existieren würde, auch wenn der Mensch nicht existierte, bildet man entweder eine Metapher oder verfällt in eine Form von Mystizismus. Wir kennen die Realität nur in der Beziehung zum Menschen, und da der Mensch ein geschichtliches Werden ist, sind auch die Erkenntnis und Realität ein Werden, ist auch Objektivität ein Werden usw.

(GH, Bd.6: 1411f.)

H.3, § (49). Kulturthemen. Ideologisches Material. Eine Untersuchung darüber, wie die ideologische Struktur einer herrschenden Klasse tatsächlich organisiert ist: das heißt die materielle Organisation, die darauf gerichtet ist, die theoretische oder ideologische „Front“ zu bewahren, zu verteidigen und zu entfalten. Der beträchtlichste und dynamischste Teil derselben ist die Presse im allgemeinen: Verlagshäuser (die implizit und explizit ein Programm haben und sich auf eine bestimmte Strömung stützen), politische Zeitungen, Zeitschriften jeder Art, wissenschaftliche, literarische, philologische, populärwissenschaftliche usw., unterschiedliche Periodika bis zu den Mitteilungsblättern der Kirchengemeinden. Eine derartige Untersuchung wäre riesenhaft, wenn im nationalen Maßstab durchgeführt: daher könnte man für eine Stadt oder für eine Reihe von Städten eine Reihe von Untersuchungen machen. Ein Zeitungs-Leitartikler müßte diese Untersuchung als allgemeines Schema für seine Arbeit haben, müßte sie sich sogar auf eigene Faust von neuem machen: wieviel glänzende Leitartikel ließen sich über das Thema schreiben!

Die Presse ist der dynamischste Teil dieser ideologischen Struktur, aber nicht der einzige: all das, was die öffentliche Meinung direkt oder indirekt beeinflußt oder beeinflussen kann, gehört zu ihr: die Bibliotheken, die Schulen, die Zirkel und Clubs unterschiedlicher Art, bis hin zur Architektur, zur Anlage der Straßen und zu den Namen derselben. Die Stellung, welche die Kirche in der modernen Gesellschaft bewahrt hat, lie-

ße sich nicht erklären, wüßte man nichts von den täglichen und geduldigen Anstrengungen, die sie macht, um fortwährend ihren besonderen Abschnitt in dieser materiellen Struktur der Ideologie zu entwickeln. Eine solche Untersuchung, ernsthaft betrieben, hätte eine gewisse Bedeutung: außer daß sie ein lebendiges historisches Modell einer solchen Struktur lieferte, würde sie an eine vorsichtigeren und genaueren Berechnung der in der Gesellschaft wirkenden Kräfte gewöhnen. Was läßt sich von seiten einer erneuernden Klasse diesem phantastischen Komplex von Schützengräben und Befestigungen der herrschenden Klasse entgegenzusetzen? Der Geist der Abspaltung, das heißt der fortschreitende Erwerb des Bewußtseins der eigenen geschichtlichen Persönlichkeit, ein Geist der Abspaltung, der bestrebt sein muß, sich von der protagonistischen Klasse auf die potentiellen verbündeten Klassen auszuweiten: all das verlangt eine komplexe ideologische Arbeit, deren erste Bedingung die genaue Kenntnis des Feldes ist, das leergemacht werden muß von seinem menschlichen Massenelement.

(GH, Bd.2: 373)

H.7, § (21). Wirksamkeit der Ideologien. An die häufige Aussage erinnern, die Marx über die „Festigkeit des Volksglaubens“ als notwendiges Element einer bestimmten Situation macht: er sagt in etwa „wenn diese Denkweise die Kraft des Volksglaubens haben wird“ usw. (Diese Aussagen suchen und sie im Kontext analysieren, in dem sie ausgedrückt sind). Eine andere Aussage von Marx ist, daß eine Überzeugung des Volkes oft die gleiche Energie wie eine materielle Kraft hat oder so ähnliche und daß sie sehr bedeutsam ist. Die Analyse dieser Aussagen führt dazu, wie ich glaube, die Konzeption des „historischen Blocks“ zu untermauern, in dem eben die materiellen Kräfte der Inhalt sind und die Ideologien die Form, eine rein didaktische Unterscheidung von Form und Inhalt, weil die materiellen Kräfte historisch nicht begreifbar wären ohne die Form, und die Ideologien individuelle Schrullen wären ohne die materiellen Kräfte.

(GH, Bd.4: 876f.)

Lebensweise und Alltagsverstand

H.10, Teil II, § (48). (...) Die Frage ist immer dieselbe: was ist der Mensch? was ist das menschliche Wesen? Wenn man den Menschen - psychologisch und spekulativ - als Individuum definiert, sind diese Probleme des Fortschritts und des Werdens unlösbar oder bleiben bloße Worte. Begreift man jedoch den Menschen als das Ensemble der gesellschaftlichen Verhältnisse, zeigt sich dagegen, daß jeder Vergleich zwischen Menschen in der Zeit unmöglich ist, weil es sich um unterschiedliche, wenn nicht heterogene Dinge handelt. Im übrigen läßt sich, da der Mensch auch das Ensemble seiner

Lebensbedingungen ist, der Unterschied zwischen der Vergangenheit und der Gegenwart quantitativ messen, da sich das Ausmaß messen läßt, in dem der Mensch die Natur und den Zufall beherrscht. Die Möglichkeit ist nicht die Wirklichkeit, doch auch sie ist eine Wirklichkeit: daß der Mensch eine Sache tun oder lassen kann, hat seine Bedeutung, um zu bewerten, was wirklich getan wird. Möglichkeit bedeutet „Freiheit“. Das Maß der Freiheit geht in den Begriff des Menschen ein. Daß es objektive Möglichkeiten gibt, nicht Hungers zu sterben, und daß dabei Hungers gestorben wird, hat anscheinend seine Bedeutung. Aber die Existenz der objektiven Bedingungen oder Möglichkeiten oder Freiheiten reicht noch nicht aus: es gilt, sie zu „erkennen“ und sich ihrer bedienen zu können. Sich ihrer bedienen zu wollen. Der Mensch ist in diesem Sinn konkreter Wille, das heißt tatsächliche Applikation des abstrakten Wollens oder Lebensimpulses auf die konkreten Mittel, die diesen Willen verwirklichen. Die eigene Persönlichkeit wird geschaffen: 1. indem dem eigenen Lebensimpuls oder Willen eine bestimmte konkrete („rationale“) Richtung gegeben wird; 2. indem die Mittel ausgemacht werden, die diesen Willen zu einem konkreten, bestimmten, nicht beliebigen machen; 3. indem dazu beigetragen wird, das Ensemble der konkreten Bedingungen zu verändern, die diesen Willen nach Maßgabe der eigenen Machtgrenzen und in der fruchtbarsten Form verwirklichen. Der Mensch ist zu begreifen als ein geschichtlicher Block von rein individuellen, subjektiven Elementen und von massenhaften, objektiven oder materiellen Elementen, zu denen das Individuum eine tätige Beziehung unterhält. Die Außenwelt, die allgemeinen Verhältnisse zu verändern, heißt sich selbst zu potenzieren, sich selbst zu entwickeln. Daß die ethische „Verbesserung“ bloß individuell sei, ist eine Illusion und ein Irrtum: die Synthese der Bestandteile der Individualität ist „individuell“, doch verwirklicht und entwickelt sie sich nicht ohne eine Tätigkeit nach außen, die äußeren Verhältnisse verändernd, beginnend bei denen zur Natur bis hin zu denen zu den anderen Menschen, in unterschiedlichem Grad in den verschiedenen gesellschaftlichen Kreisen, in denen man lebt, bis zum weitesten Verhältnis, das die gesamte menschliche Gattung umfaßt. Daher kann man sagen, daß der Mensch wesentlich „politisch“ ist, denn die Tätigkeit zur bewußten Umformung und Leitung der anderen Menschen verwirklicht seine „Menschlichkeit“, sein „menschliches Wesen“.

(GH, Bd.6: 1341f.)

H.10, Teil II, § (54). Einführung ins Studium der Philosophie. Was ist der Mensch? (...) An diesem Punkt muß man den Begriff des Menschen reformieren. Das heißt, man muß den Menschen als eine Abfolge tätiger Verhältnisse (als einen Prozeß) begreifen, wobei die Individualität die größte Bedeutung hat,

jedoch nicht das einzige Element ist, das es zu berücksichtigen gilt. Die Menschheit, die sich in jeder Individualität widerspiegelt, setzt sich aus unterschiedlichen Elementen zusammen: 1. dem Individuum; 2. den anderen Menschen; 3. der Natur. Aber das 2. und 3. Element sind nicht so einfach, wie es scheinen könnte. Das Individuum tritt nicht durch Aneinanderreihung in Verhältnisse mit den anderen Menschen ein, sondern organisch, also indem es eine Teilnahme an Organismen eingeht, von ganz einfachen bis zu sehr komplexen. Ebenso tritt der Mensch nicht einfach aufgrund der Tatsache, daß er selbst Natur ist, ins Verhältnis zur Natur, sondern tätig, mittels der Arbeit und der Technik. Mehr noch. Diese Verhältnisse sind nicht mechanisch. Sie sind tätig und bewußt, das heißt, sie entsprechen einem größeren oder geringeren Grad des Verständnisses, das der Einzelmensch von ihnen hat. Daher kann man sagen, daß jeder in dem Maße selbst anders wird, sich verändert, in dem er die Gesamtheit der Verhältnisse, deren Verknüpfungszentrum er ist, anders werden läßt und verändert. In diesem Sinn ist und kann der wirkliche Philosoph nichts anderes sein als der Politiker, das heißt der tätige Mensch, der die Umwelt verändert, wobei unter Umwelt das Ensemble der Verhältnisse zu verstehen ist, die jeder einzelne eingeht. Sich eine Persönlichkeit bilden heißt dann, wenn die eigene Individualität das Ensemble dieser Verhältnisse ist, ein Bewußtsein dieser Verhältnisse gewinnen, die eigene Persönlichkeit verändern heißt das Ensemble dieser Verhältnisse verändern. Aber wie gesagt, diese Verhältnisse sind keine einfachen. Schließlich sind einige derselben notwendig, andere willkürlich. Ferner verändert es sie bereits, wenn man ein mehr oder weniger tiefgreifendes Bewußtsein von ihnen hat (was bedeutet, die Weise, wie sie sich verändern lassen, mehr oder weniger gut zu kennen). Die notwendigen Verhältnisse selbst ändern Aspekt und Bedeutung, insofern sie in ihrer Notwendigkeit erkannt werden. In diesem Sinn ist Erkenntnis Macht. Aber das Problem ist auch aus einem anderen Grund komplex: weil es nicht genügt, das Ensemble der Verhältnisse zu erkennen, inwiefern sie zu einem bestimmten Zeitpunkt als ein bestimmtes System existieren, sondern es darauf ankommt, sie genetisch zu erkennen, im Flusse ihrer Bildung, da jedes Individuum nicht nur die Synthese der bestehenden Verhältnisse ist, sondern auch der Geschichte dieser Verhältnisse, das heißt, es ist die Zusammenfassung der gesamten Vergangenheit. Man wird sagen, es sei recht wenig, was das einzelne Individuum seinen Kräften gemäß zu ändern vermag. Was nur bis zu einem gewissen Punkt stimmt. Denn der einzelne kann sich mit all denen zusammenschließen, die dieselbe Veränderung wollen, und wenn diese Veränderung vernünftig ist, kann der einzelne sich in einem imponierenden Ausmaß vervielfachen und

eine Veränderung erzielen, die viel radikaler ist, als es auf den ersten Blick möglich erscheint. Gesellschaften, denen ein einzelner angehören kann: sie sind sehr zahlreich, zahlreicher, als es zunächst scheint. Durch diese „Gesellschaften“ hat der einzelne teil am Menschengeschlecht. Ebenso vielfältig sind die Weisen, in denen der einzelne ins Verhältnis zur Natur tritt, denn unter Technik darf man nicht nur jene Gesamtheit industriell angewandter wissenschaftlicher Erkenntnisse verstehen, was für gewöhnlich darunter verstanden wird, sondern auch die „geistigen“ Werkzeuge, die philosophische Erkenntnis.

Daß der Mensch nicht anders als in Gesellschaft lebend begriffen werden kann, ist ein Gemeinplatz, doch werden nicht alle notwendigen, auch individuellen, Schlußfolgerungen daraus gezogen: daß eine bestimmte menschliche Gesellschaft eine bestimmte Gesellschaft der Sachen voraussetzt und daß die menschliche Gesellschaft nur möglich ist, insofern eine bestimmte Gesellschaft der Sachen existiert, ist ebenfalls ein Gemeinplatz. Es ist wahr, daß diesen außerindividuellen Organismen bisher eine mechanistische und deterministische Bedeutung gegeben wurde (sowohl der *societas hominum* wie der *societas rerum*): daher die Reaktion. Man muß eine Lehre erarbeiten, in der all diese Verhältnisse tätig und in Bewegung sind, wobei ganz deutlich festgestellt wird, daß der Sitz dieser Tätigkeit das Bewußtsein des Einzelmenschen ist, der erkennt, will, bewundert, schafft, insofern er bereits erkennt, will, bewundert, schafft usw und sich nicht als isoliert, sondern als voller Möglichkeiten begreift, die ihm von anderen Menschen und von der Gesellschaft der Dinge geboten werden, wovon er unvermeidlich eine gewisse Kenntnis hat. (Wie jeder Mensch Philosoph ist, so ist jeder Mensch Wissenschaftler usw.)

(GH, Bd.6: 1346ff.)

Heft 13, § (7). Frage des „Kollektivmenschen“ oder des „gesellschaftlichen Konformismus“.

Erziehungs- und Bildungsaufgabe des Staates, der immer das Ziel hat, neue und höhere Zivilisationstypen zu schaffen, die „Zivilisation“ und die Moral der breitesten Volksmassen den Erfordernissen der ständigen Entwicklung des ökonomischen Produktionsapparates anzupassen, folglich auch physisch neue Menschheitstypen herauszuarbeiten. Aber wie wird es jedem einzelnen Individuum gelingen, sich in den Kollektivmenschen einzugliedern, und wie wird sich der erzieherische Druck auf die Einzelnen vollziehen, damit ihr Konsens und ihre Mitarbeit erreicht wird, die aus Notwendigkeit und Zwang „Freiheit“ werden lassen? Frage des „Rechts“, dessen Begriff auszuweiten sein wird, indem darin auch diejenigen Tätigkeiten einbegriffen werden, die heute unter die Formel des „juristisch Indifferenten“ fallen und die zur Domäne der Zivilge-

sellschaft gehören, die ohne „Sanktionen“ und ohne verbindliche „Verpflichtungen“ operiert, aber nichtsdestoweniger einen kollektiven Druck ausübt und objektive Bildungsergebnisse bei den Gewohnheiten, bei den Weisen des Denkens und Handelns, bei der Moral usw. erzielt.

Relativ wenig Politischer Begriff der sogenannten „permanenten Revolution“, vor 1848 als wissenschaftlich ausgearbeiteter Ausdruck der jakobinischen Erfahrungen von 1789 bis zum Thermidor entstanden. Die Formel gehört einer historischen Epoche an, in der die großen politischen Massenparteien und die großen ökonomischen Gewerkschaften noch nicht existierten und die Gesellschaft unter vielen Aspekten sozusagen noch im flüßigen Zustand war: größere Zurückgebliebenheit des Landes und nahezu vollständiges Monopol der politisch-staatlichen Wirksamkeit in wenigen Städten oder gar nur in einer (Paris für Frankreich), relativ wenig entwickelter Staatsapparat und größere Autonomie der Zivilgesellschaft gegenüber der Tätigkeit des Staates, bestimmtes System der militärischen Kräfte und der nationalen Bewaffnung, größere Autonomie der nationalen Ökonomien gegenüber den ökonomischen Verhältnissen des Weltmarktes usw. In der Zeit nach 1870 verändern sich mit der europäischen Kolonialexpansion alle diese Elemente, die internen und internationalen Organisationsverhältnisse des Staates werden komplexer und massiver, und die achtundvierziger Formel der „permanenten Revolution“ wird in der politischen Wissenschaft in der Formel der „zivilen Hegemonie“ umgearbeitet und aufgehoben. In der politischen Kunst findet statt, was auch in der Kriegskunst stattfindet: der Bewegungskrieg wird immer mehr zum Stellungskrieg, und man kann sagen, daß ein Staat einen Krieg gewinnt, insofern er ihn peinlich genau und technisch in Zeiten des Friedens vorbereitet. Die massive Struktur der modernen Demokratien, sowohl als staatliche Organisationen als auch als Komplex von Vereinigungen im zivilen Leben, bilden für die politische Kunst so etwas wie die „Schützengräben“ und die dauerhaften Befestigungen der Front im Stellungskrieg: sie machen das Element der Bewegung, das vorher der „ganze“ Krieg war, zu einem „partiellen“, usw. Die Frage stellt sich für die modernen Staaten, nicht für die zurückgebliebenen Länder und für die Kolonien, wo noch die Formen vorherrschen, die andernorts überwunden und anachronistisch geworden sind. Auch die Frage der Bedeutung der Ideologien (wie sich aus der Polemik Malagodi-Croce entnehmen läßt) - mit den Bemerkungen Croces über Sorels „Mythos“, die sich gegen die „Leidenschaft“ wenden lassen - muß in einer Abhandlung zur politischen Wissenschaft untersucht werden.

H.11, § (12). (...) Anmerkung I. Durch die eigene Weltauffassung gehört man immer zu einer bestimmten Gruppierung, und genau zu der aller gesellschaftlichen Ele-

mente, die ein- und dieselbe Denk- und Handlungsweise teilen. Man ist Konformist irgendeines Konformismus, man ist immer Masse-Mensch oder Kollektiv-Mensch. Die Frage ist folgende: von welchem geschichtlichen Typus ist der Konformismus, der Masse-Mensch, zu dem man gehört? Wenn die Weltauffassung nicht kritisch und kohärent, sondern zufällig und zusammenhangslos ist, gehört man gleichzeitig zu einer Vielzahl von Masse-Menschen, die eigene Persönlichkeit ist auf bizarre Weise zusammengesetzt: es finden sich in ihr Elemente des Höhlenmenschen und Prinzipien der modernsten und fortgeschrittensten Wissenschaft, Vorurteile aller vergangenen, lokal bornierten geschichtlichen Phasen und Intuitionen einer künftigen Philosophie, wie sie einem weltweit vereinigten Menschengeschlecht zueigen sein wird. Die eigene Weltauffassung kritisieren heißt mithin, sie einheitlich und kohärent zu machen und bis zu dem Punkt anzuheben, zu dem das fortgeschrittenste Denken der Welt gelangt ist. Es bedeutet folglich auch, die gesamte bisherige Philosophie zu kritisieren, insofern sie verfestigte Schichtungen in der Popularphilosophie hinterlassen hat. Der Anfang der kritischen Ausarbeitung ist das Bewußtsein dessen, was wirklich ist, das heißt ein „Erkenne dich selbst“ als Produkt des bislang abgelaufenen Geschichtsprozesses, der in einem selbst eine Unendlichkeit von Spuren hinterlassen hat, übernommen ohne Inventarvorbehalt. Ein solches Inventar gilt es zu Anfang zu erstellen. (...) Eine Philosophie der Praxis kann anfänglich nicht anders als in polemischer und kritischer Haltung auftreten, als Aufhebung der vorhergehenden Denkweise und des konkreten bestehenden Denkens [...]. Mithin vor allem als Kritik des ‚Alltagsverstands‘. (...)

Zum kritischen Selbstverständnis kommt es daher über einen Kampf politischer ‚Hegemonien‘, kontrastierender Richtungen, zuerst im Feld der Ethik, dann der Politik, um zu einer höheren Ausarbeitung der eigenen Auffassung des Wirklichen zu gelangen. Das Bewußtsein (das heißt das politische Bewußtsein), ist die erste Phase eines darüber hinausgehenden progressiven Selbstbewußtseins, in dem Theorie und Praxis schließlich eine Einheit bilden. (...) Eben deshalb ist hervorzuheben wie die politische Entfaltung des Hegemoniebegriffs außer einem praktisch-politischen einen großen philosophischen Fortschritt darstellt, weil er notwendigerweise eine intellektuelle Einheit mitumfaßt und unterstellt, und eine Ethik, die einer Auffassung des Wirklichen entspricht, die den Alltagsverstand aufgehoben hat und, sei es auch noch innerhalb enger Grenzen, kritisch geworden ist.

(GH, Bd.6: 1376ff.)

H.11, § (13) (...) Was bisher gesagt wurde, bedeutet nicht, daß es im Alltagsverstand keine Wahrheit gibt. Es bedeutet, daß der Alltagsverstand ein zweideutiger,

widersprüchlicher, vielgestaltiger Begriff ist und daß sich auf den Alltagsverstand als Prüfstein von Wahrheiten zu beziehen, ein Unverstand ist. Man wird zu Recht sagen können, eine bestimmte Wahrheit sei zu Alltagsverstand geworden, um anzudeuten, daß sie sich über den Umkreis der Intellektuellengruppen hinaus verbreitert hat, doch macht man in diesem Fall nichts als eine Feststellung geschichtlichen Charakters und eine Aussage über geschichtliche Rationalität; in diesem Sinn [...] hat das Argument seinen Wert, gerade weil der Alltagsverstand auf bornierte Weise neuerungsfeindlich und konservativ ist, und es geschafft zu haben, eine neue Wahrheit in ihn eindringen zu lassen, ist Beweis, daß diese Wahrheit eine beachtliche Kraft der Expansion und Evidenz hat.

(GH, Bd.6: 1397)

Julia Masetovic

Antonio Gramsci und das Konzept der gesellschaftlichen Hegemonie

In der Bewegung gegen die blauschwarze Regierung berufen sich nicht nur die bürgerlich-demokratischen, grün-liberalen und philanthropischen Kräfte auf die Zivilgesellschaft als Subjekt und Objekt ihres Handelns. Auch etliche Linke teilen dieses Konzept, leiten es aber vordergründig von einer anderen Quelle her - nämlich von den Theorien Antonio Gramscis (1891-1937), der sich vor allem in seinen während der faschistischen Kerkerhaft (ab November 1926) entstandenen Gefängnisheften mit den Begriffen Zivilgesellschaft und Hegemonie auseinandergesetzt hat.

Gramsci stammte aus dem wirtschaftlich rückständigen Süden Italiens, aus Sardinien, stieß während seiner Studien im norditalienischen Turin zur (sozialistischen) Arbeiterbewegung. 1919 hatte er in Turin, damals noch als Mitglied der Sozialistischen Partei mit der Zeitschrift *Ordine Nuovo* (Neue Ordnung), versucht, in die heftigen Klassenkämpfe an der Seite der Betriebsräte zu intervenieren, 1921 gehörte er zu den Mitbegründern der italienischen Kommunistischen Partei. Er war sicherlich kein begeisterter Anhänger der stalinistischen Bürokratisierung der Kommunistischen Internationale, leistete aber keinen konsistenten Widerstand und arrangierte sich letztlich.

Die Problematik des Auseinanderklaffens Italiens in einen industrialisierten Norden und einen agrarischen Süden mit starkem katholischem Übergewicht prägte wesentlich seine politischen Überlegungen: Wie ist eine sozialistische Umwälzung möglich, solange das konservative, bäuerlich-klerikale Element in der Bevölkerung deutlich dominiert? Für Gramsci konnten die Kommunist/inn/en nur dann erfolgreich sein, wenn das Proletariat seine Hegemonie über die Zivilgesellschaft herstellen konnte. Die Zivilgesellschaft bedeutete für ihn alle Bereiche der Gesellschaft außerhalb der klassischen staatlichen Institutionen, der Parteien und Organisationen - also den Bildungsbereich, die Kultur, die Medien etc. Es ging also um die Vormacht im ideologischen Staatsapparat.

Nach der Machtergreifung des italienischen Faschismus (Oktober 1922) dehnte Gramsci das Hegemonie-Konzept auf kleinbürgerliche und bürgerliche Schichten aus - kein Wunder also, dass die KPI in den 70er Jahren ihr historischer Kompromiss getauftes Konzept der Zusammenarbeit mit den reaktionären Christdemokraten von dem sardischen Märtyrer herzuleiten versuchte und dass sich heute die KPÖ bemüht, ihre

zivilgesellschaftliche Rechtsentwicklung mit dem italienischen Marxisten Gramsci zu legitimieren, der das Problem der ideellen Vorherrschaft im komplexen System der bürgerlichen Gesellschaft aufgezeigt habe (KPÖ-Dokumententwurf für den 31. Parteitag: Feministisch, Demokratisch, Kommunistisch.). Die sympathische Gramsci-Variante soll wohl dazu herhalten, ein wohlmeinendes Publikum davon überzeugen, dass die KPI oder die KPÖ ohnehin nicht mehr so ist wie früher - nämlich ein rigider stalinistischer Apparat, in dem das ZK mit der Partei wedelt.

Einen zentralen Stellenwert in Gramscis Theorie nehmen die Intellektuellen ein - sie sind die Überreder im Dienste der herrschenden Klasse, der Verkäufer der Hegemonie der herrschenden Klasse. Gelingt es dem Proletariat, die Intelligenz auf seine Seite zu ziehen, kann es einen historischen Block errichten, d.h. die Einheit unterschiedlicher politischer und gesellschaftlicher Kräfte herstellen. Gramsci hatte ein Verständnis von Staat, Partei und Revolution, das wesentlich stärker von der hegelianisch gefärbten humanistisch-idealistischen Philosophie Benedetto Croce (1866-1952) geprägt war als von der dialektisch-materialistischen Methode des Marxismus.

Das Hegemonie-Konzept Gramscis trägt in wesentlichen Punkten starke bürgerlich-aufklärerische Züge - die Revolution sei erst dann möglich, wenn das Proletariat seine ideologische Vorherrschaft hergestellt habe. Dass damit eine Tendenz entsteht, das alte gradualistisch-reformistische Etappenkonzept der Sozialdemokratie zu beleben, wonach für den Anfang langsam und schrittweise die Kräfteverhältnisse in der (Zivil-) Gesellschaft in Richtung Sozialismus verschoben werden müssten, bevor der Kapitalismus gestürzt werden könne. Das erklärt wiederum auch, warum sich Gramsci in den 1970er und insbesondere 1980er Jahren bei sogenannten linken Sozialisten in der SPÖ und SPD großer Beliebtheit erfreute (einer von ihnen war der jetzige SPÖ-Vorsitzende Alfred Gusenbauer), warum der Kommunist Gramsci mit akademischen Strömungen wie den Cultural Studies durchaus kompatibel ist. Bei manchen Gramsci-Fans ist schließlich auch die kleinbürgerliche Binsenweisheit, dass sich erst einmal das Bewusstsein der Menschen - durch die geduldige Arbeit der Sozialdemokratie oder durch den politischen Anspruch von Intellektuellen - ändern müsse bevor die Gesellschaft verändert werden

kann, nicht mehr weit.

Zweifellos hat Gramsci eine Reihe wichtiger Fragen aufgeworfen. So ist gerade das Problem, wie die bürgerliche Ideologie und insbesondere ihre politischen Vertreter/innen in der Arbeiterbewegung zu bekämpfen sind, eine wesentliche Frage der revolutionären Politik. Allerdings haben wir es bei Gramsci und noch mehr bei seinen Anhänger/inne/n mit mehr oder weniger deutlichem Schematismus zu tun. Natürlich kämpfen Marxist/inn/en immer um politischen Einfluß unter Arbeiter/inne/n, Jugendlichen etc., in Zeiten eines stabilen Kapitalismus und einer gefestigten bürgerlichen (Zivil-) Gesellschaft mit ihrem Staatsapparat, ihren Schulen und ihren Medien sind die Möglichkeiten da aber begrenzt. Eine politische Hegemonie des Proletariats, um der es Marxist/inn/en geht (und nicht um eine Hegemonie einer bürgerlichen Zivilgesellschaft gegenüber einem bürgerlichen Staat), ist nicht immer möglich.

Erst in Krisensituationen des Systems, wenn die unten nicht mehr so weiter wollen wie bisher und die oben nicht mehr so weiter können (W.I. Lenin), gibt es die Chance, dass eine aktive organisierte Minderheit, die revolutionären Kräfte, eine Mehrheit der Lohnabhängigen für eine antikapitalistische Perspektive gewinnt. Die Bewusstseinsentwicklung der Mehrheit der Klasse erfolgt nicht nur, aber v.a. in der Bewegung, in Aktion, dann allerdings oft sehr rasch - so rasch, dass linke Organisationen, in die sich ein gewisser Konservatismus eingeschlichen hat, immer wieder hinterher hinken. Wahlergebnisse von gestern beispielsweise können in Klassenkämpfen rasch nur noch Relikte aus der Zeit der Passivität sein. Außerhalb zugespitzter Situationen geht es für Revolutionäre v.a. darum, Kräfte zu sammeln, zu organisieren und sich so weit wie möglich in der Arbeiterklasse zu verankern.

Demgegenüber haben reformistische Organisationen, die sich v.a. auf die bornierte Zögerlichkeit von bürokratischen und bessergestellten Schichten der Arbeiterklasse stützen, ein statisches Verständnis. Sie orientieren sich nicht auf die Gewinnung der Ausgebeuteten in kämpferischen Dynamiken für eine antikapitalistische Umwälzung, sondern akzeptieren den Status quo der (ungünstigen) politischen Verhältnisse, die sie dann durch Bündnisse und Zugeständnisse an bürgerliche Parteien und Strömungen langsam - gradualistisch - verändern wollen. Das ist die klassische Konzeption der Sozialdemokratie. Das ist

die offizielle Doktrin der stalinisierten KPen seit der Festschreibung der sogenannten Volksfront 1935 (siehe dazu Eric Wegners Artikel Marxistische Revolutionstheorie in der Arbeiterbewegung der letzten 150 Jahre, in: *Marxismus* Nr. 13), die dann in der 1970er und 1980er Jahren - leicht modifiziert - als antimonopolistische Demokratie verkauft wurde. Der gemeinsame Kern ist die Aufgabe des Klassenkampfes und die politische Unterordnung unter die Interessen der sogenannten demokratischen

Bourgeoisie - was noch immer zur politischen und organisatorischen Entwaffnung der Arbeiter/innen und zum Sieg der Rechten geführt hat (China 1927, Spanien 1936, Griechenland 1944, Chile 1973 und unzählige andere Klassenkämpfe).

Seit den 1970er Jahren bemühen sich nun reformistische Strömungen (ausgehend von der KPI) ihre Integration in das kapitalistische System mit Berufung auf Gramsci zu rechtfertigen - oder neuerdings ihre Einfügung in die modische Zivilgesell-

schaftsideologie der herrschenden Klasse. Diese Berufung erfolgt zu großen Teilen zu unrecht, denn Gramsci war sicherlich subjektiv ein kommunistischer Revolutionär, der mit den meisten seiner Fans nicht zu vergleichen ist. Teilweise erfolgt diese Berufung aber auch zurecht, denn Gramscis theoretisches, fragmentarisch gebliebenes Modell von Zivilgesellschaft und Hegemonie liefert tatsächlich Ansatzpunkte für ein gradualistisches, letztlich reformistisches politisches Konzept.

Keith Harvey

Gramsci and the revolutionary tradition

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THE YEAR 1987 marks the fiftieth anniversary of the death of the Italian revolutionary Antonio Gramsci. In 1926 he was arrested by Mussolini's fascists and two years later sentenced after a show trial to twenty years imprisonment. Although released in 1937 he was too ill to survive. He died in April that year.

The commemoration of his death has once again provided the occasion for quite distinct tendencies on the left to wrestle over his legacy. *Marxism Today* (MT), the journal of the Euro-Stalinist CPGB, reminded its audience in its April issue that:

"Without doubt, Gramsci has been the most important single theoretical influence on *Marxism Today* over the last decade."¹

This influence was filtered through the Italian Communist Party (PCI). Yet the PCI had not always been so ready to recognise Gramsci's contribution to Marxism. It was ten years after Gramsci's death before the PCI decided to publish an edition of Gramsci's Prison Notebooks, suitably censored to remove any favourable references to Trotsky or hints of opposition to Stalin's policies in the 1930s.

But the crisis of Stalinism after 1956 produced an ideological vacuum in the ranks of the western Stalinist parties. In Gramsci the PCI found an "Italian Marxism" that could fit the bill. It could claim continuity with the formation of the PCI, yet distance itself from the "excesses" of Stalinism in the 1930s; it could claim to find in Gramsci's work a critique of "statism" that could allow it to reject the monolithism of Stalinism without collapsing into social democratism or conceding to the revolutionary (i.e. Trotskyist) critique of Stalinism.

The PCI were to argue that Gramsci's conception of "hegemony" lent support to their policy in the 1970s for parliamentary

backing to the anti-working class government of Christian Democracy (the "historic compromise").

In the last few years, however, the reformist trajectory of the PCI has led this party to put some distance between itself and Gramsci. Earlier this year the PCI leader, Natta, claimed that Gramsci was too "fundamentalist". It is no surprise, therefore, to find it increasingly common for anti-Stalinists to lay claim to Gramsci's heritage.

Fifty years ago in an obituary to Gramsci the Italian Trotskyist Pietro Tresso said it was vital not to allow the Stalinists to "make use of Gramsci's personality for their own purposes"². This remains the case, but modern centrism attempts to go further. For example Livio Maitan's appreciation of the Italian revolutionary's life in the Mandelbrite review of the United Secretariat of the Fourth International seeks to establish that there is a "completely revolutionary core" to Gramsci's work and that "Revolutionary Marxists have the right and the duty to claim the heritage of Antonio Gramsci"³

The Socialist Workers Party (GB), while correctly taking Stalinism to task for seeking to depict Gramsci as a reformist, have, like Maitan, failed completely to generalise out of the Italian revolutionist's life a communist appraisal of his contribution to Marxism. John Molyneux says of the years 1922-26:

"Even a casual glance at Gramsci's writings of this period show that he remains firmly on the terrain of revolution."⁴

Chris Harman's pamphlet for the SWP – *Gramsci versus reformism* – adopts a similarly one-sided view of Gramsci. For Harman it is good enough that Gramsci believed in revolution not reform, never abandoned the insurrectionary road and recognised both the need for a Bolshevik-type party and the

seeds of a workers' state lodged within the factory councils' movement.

In essence, Harman, Molyneux and Maitan only display an inverted error to the Stalinists. In their account Gramsci's contribution to the PCI up until his arrest is unproblematic and shows him to stand four square on the ground of the revolutionary Comintern. The "Lyon Theses" of 1926 are represented as the pinnacle of his political work. His work after that time, as found in the Prison Notebooks, whilst containing certain errors, does not represent a rupture with the revolutionary Gramsci. For Maitan, "there is an undeniable continuity in Gramsci's thought and approach from his writings in the years of the Russian Revolution . . . to the 1935 notes when the Notebooks end."⁵ In Harman's view, it was simply that the fascists succeeded, "in preventing his Marxism from fully realising the potential displayed in *L'Ordine Nuovo* and the 'Lyons Theses'."⁶

In effect these accounts only serve to underline the truth of Trotsky's adage that it is very difficult for centrists to recognise centrism in others. It is necessary to analyse things more deeply than this. It is precisely because the present day SWP or USFI judge matters from a series of revolutionary principles and disdain to measure their own (or others') contributions by the yardstick of programme, that they fail to assess Gramsci's political theory and practice against the background of the leadership and policies of the Comintern in the period 1919-26.

When analysed from this perspective it is possible to show that while Gramsci was never a reformist, his politics were seriously at variance with the practice and theory of Lenin and Trotsky while they were in the leadership of the Comintern. In short, it can be seen that in fact Gramsci traversed a classical centrist

evolution, in his case from ultra-leftism to right-centrism.

A life of struggle

Antonio Gramsci was born in Ales, Italy, on the island of Sardinia in 1891. As a boy he suffered from health problems – his spine was malformed due to a childhood accident which left him hunch-backed.

In 1911 Gramsci won a scholarship that allowed him to study at the University of Turin where he read literature.

At the time Turin was going through a process of industrialisation, with the Fiat and Lan- cia factories recruiting workers from poorer regions. Trade unions were taking root, and the first industrial conflicts erupted. Gramsci was closely involved with these developments and as a result he joined the Italian Socialist Party in late 1913.

Gramsci's financial problems and poor health, as well as his growing political commitment, forced him to abandon his education in early 1915. But by this time, he had closely studied the thought of Antonio Labriola, Rodolfo Mondolfo, Giovanni Gentile and, most importantly, Benedetto Croce, possibly the most widely respected Italian intellectual of his day. Such thinkers espoused a brand of Hegelian Marxism to which Labriola had given the name "philosophy of praxis".

From 1914 onward Gramsci wrote for socialist newspapers such as *Il Grido del Popolo* and in 1916 he became co-editor of the Piedmont edition of *Avanti!*, the Socialist Party official organ.

Gramsci was, at this time, also involved in the education and organisation of Turin workers. In the wake of the arrest of Socialist Party leaders that followed the revolutionary riots of August 1917, Gramsci became one of Turin's leading socialists when he was both elected to the party's Provisional Committee and made editor of *Il Grido del Popolo*.

In April 1919 with Togliatti, Angelo Tasca and Umberto Terracini Gramsci set up the weekly newspaper *L'Ordine Nuovo*. In October the Socialist Party moved by a large majority to join the Third International. The *L'Ordine Nuovo* group was seen by Lenin as closest in orientation to the Bolsheviks, and it received his backing against the anti-parliamentary programme of the ultra-left Amadeo Bordiga.

Gramsci's faction were most identified with the workers' councils, which had come into existence in Turin during the large strikes of 1919 and 1920. He argued the workers should use these to take control of production. For which he was attacked by Bordiga for betraying a "syndicalist" tendency.

The failure of the workers' councils to develop into a national movement and successfully challenge for power led Gramsci to denounce the PSI's centrist leadership and as a result he allied with Bordiga's far larger "abstentionist" faction.

On 21 January 1921, in the town of Livorno, the Communist Party of Italy (Partito Comunista d'Italia - PCd'I) was founded. Gramsci

would be a leader of the party from its inception but he subordinated himself to Bordiga, whose emphasis on purity of principles dominated the party's programme.

In 1922 Gramsci left for Russia to represent the new party in the Comintern leadership.

In late 1922 and early 1923, Mussolini's government embarked on a campaign of repression against the opposition parties, arresting most of the PCd'I leadership, including Bordiga. At the end of 1923, Gramsci travelled from Moscow to Vienna, where he tried to revive a party torn by factional strife.

In 1924 Gramsci, now recognised as head of the PCd'I, was elected as a deputy for the Veneto. He started organising the launch of the official newspaper of the party, called *L'Unità* (Unity), living in Rome while his family stayed in Moscow.

On 9 November 1926 Mussolini enacted a new wave of emergency laws. The fascist police arrested Gramsci, despite his parliamentary immunity, and brought him to Regina Coeli, the famous Roman prison. He was immediately sentenced to five years on the remote island of Ustica; the following year he received a sentence of 20 years of prison in Turi, near Bari.

His health declined steadily over the years in jail, and he was generally isolated inside prison, cut-off from detailed information about what was happening in the outside world. In 1934 his health deteriorated severely and he gained conditional freedom, after having already visited some hospitals in Civitavecchia, Formia and Rome. He died in Rome at the age of 46, shortly after being released from prison.

Revolutionary Italy

In 1911 Gramsci went to Turin to study at the University. It was there that he was to come into contact with the powerful Turin labour movement whose centre of gravity was to be found in the Fiat car plants and related industries. In 1913 he joined the Socialist Party (PSI).

Drawn more and more into the work of the party, Gramsci gave up his studies in November 1915 to join the editorial board of the PSI paper *Il Grido del Popolo*. Within months he was writing for the Turin edition of the official PSI daily *Avanti!*. In these years as an active militant, but before the Russian Revolution of 1917 shook the foundations of European social democracy, Gramsci's politics were a considerable distance from those of Lenin and the Bolsheviks, despite the fact that Italy and Russia presented very similar strategic and tactical tasks.

By the time Gramsci became a conscious revolutionary in 1915, the Bolsheviks had gone through the experience of one revolution and counter-revolution and in the process had clearly formulated their positions on the revolutionary party and the agrarian question. The implications of these positions were to elude the lefts in the PSI until 1921. By 1915 Lenin had come to grasp the reasons for the col-

lapse of the Second International in the face of imperialist war and the need for a complete political break with it. Gramsci and the left in the PSI were ignorant of Lenin's attitude to these events.

Gramsci's own political apprenticeship had been markedly different to Lenin's. It was not the classically "orthodox" Marxist tradition of Kautsky and the German SPD or Plekhanov which formed Gramsci's background, but rather a specifically Italianised version of Marxism which found its way to Gramsci through the works of Croce, Labriola and Gentile. It was to these figures that Gramsci turned for a remedy to the weaknesses that he perceived in the practice and theory of the right wing in the Second International and the PSI.

Gramsci felt that the passivity and fatalism of this trend was itself related to an original flaw in the historical materialism of Marx and Engels. He considered that Marx's critique of political economy as found in *Capital* was in fact mechanical materialism which ignored the role and power of the subjective factor (the working class) to become conscious of its own exploitation and rise up to overthrow a system regardless of economic conditions. Thus he saw the materialism of Marxism as deficient and in need of a return to Hegel, which Croce advocated, in order to inject a dose of idealism and provide an adequate account of the subjective political factor in revolutionary politics.

Lenin and Trotsky's approach to the problems of the Russian Revolution were very different to this. As early as 1899 Lenin, in polemics with the Narodniks, argued against their mechanistic interpretation of Marx's political economy which led them to conclude that the backwardness of Russia's internal market meant that the development of capitalism in Russia could be avoided.

As early as 1905 Trotsky outlined, in his theory of "permanent revolution", that Russian capitalism had to be understood in the context of the uneven and combined development of capitalism on a world scale. In alliance with European, especially French, capitalism, the Tsarist autocracy had overseen the rapid extension of capitalism in Russia. Precisely because of this both Lenin and Trotsky contested the legal Marxist view, however, which insisted that because of this development the leadership of the bourgeois revolution against the Tsar fell to the Russian bourgeoisie.

They proved that the weakness of an indigenous Russian bourgeoisie and the social weight of the Russian proletariat combined to guarantee that the former would bloc with reaction against the working class when faced with a real fight to force through bourgeois democratic demands.

Whereas for Gramsci the revolution in backward Italy had to be carried through despite its social relations through an act of will, for Lenin and Trotsky the revolution in backward Russia would occur precisely because of the contradictions in the material fabric of Russian capitalism. The flaws in Gramsci's meth-

odological grasp of Marxism betrayed a real weakness in his grasp of historical materialism. For a while in the 1920s, as Gramsci was propelled towards the positions of the revolutionary Comintern, the significance of these weaknesses became obscured. The full significance of them were only to be fully revealed in the Prison Notebooks in his discussion of “civil society” and the “state”.

Gramsci and the Russian Revolution

It was with this method that Gramsci greeted the Russian Revolution of 1917. While welcoming it as a “proletarian act . . . [which] must naturally result in a socialist regime”,⁷ he regarded it as a confirmation of his own view of Marxism. He considered it a “Revolution against *Das Kapital*” and saw in the Bolsheviks’ work “the continuation of Italian and German idealist thought, and which in Marx was contaminated by positivistic and naturalistic incrustations.”⁸

Yet despite this attack on “Marxism” in methodological terms his real target was the Menshevik strategy which believed that there was a “fatal necessity for a bourgeoisie to be formed in Russia, for a capitalist era to open, before the proletariat might even think of rising up, of their own class demands, of their revolution.”⁹

In Lenin he saw the kind of leader who could force the pace of history by an act of organised will rather than someone who could give a conscious expression of the social contradictions in Russian society.

As the revolutionary crisis deepened in Italy in the years after the Russian Revolution Gramsci had occasion to reflect further on the lessons that could be learned from Lenin. In August 1917 workers in Turin led an insurrection against the local state, which was supported by a general strike throughout the whole of the Piedmont region. Eventually defeated at the cost of 500 lives and another 2,000 casualties, the Turin workers refused to be subdued.

The working class movement rose again in an unprecedented manner during the years 1919-20. In these years the PSI grew from 81,000 in 1919 to 216,000 in 1920. The trade union federation under the direction of the PSI – the GCL – mushroomed from 320,000 to 2.3 million between 1914 and 1920.

In April 1919 Gramsci, with others, set up the paper *L'Ordine Nuovo*. Very quickly Gramsci steered it away from a simple diet of abstract propagandism with a heavy emphasis on cultural items towards a paper that sought to transform the growing movement of factory committees into something akin to the soviets in Russia. In June he wrote of the workers’ state:

“This state does not pop up by magic: the Bolsheviks worked for eight months to spread and make their slogans concrete: all power to the Soviets, and the Soviets were already known to the Russian workers in 1905. Italian

communists must treasure the Russian experience and save on time and labour.”¹⁰

In October 1919 the PSI affiliated to the Comintern and the following month fought a general election on a programme which called for the dictatorship of the proletariat. They won the largest bloc of seats in the new parliament – 156 seats out of 508. In early 1920 the PSI went on to win control in over half the municipal councils. Without question the Italian workers were seeking the path of revolution.

By the spring of 1920 the struggle in the factories had risen to a higher stage, with the formation of the Internal Commissions which enabled the workers to control whole aspects of the factory. Throughout the summer of 1920 in excess of half a million workers were involved in the commissions and councils. Gramsci grasped exactly what was at stake:

“Under the capitalists the factory was a miniature state, ruled over by a despotic board. Today after the workers’ occupations, this despotic power in the factories has been smashed; the right to choose passed into the hands of the working class. Every factory that has industrial executives has become an illegal state, a proletarian republic living from day to day, awaiting the outcome of events.”¹¹

But this was the crux of the matter; how to direct the “outcome of events”, how to turn dual power in the factories into a challenge for national state power? Here Gramsci’s weaknesses over the party question were cruelly exposed.

Certainly the maximalist leadership around Serrati were guilty of refusing to take responsibility for organising the working class through the party to prepare for the seizure of state power. But Gramsci had always failed to strive for a revolutionary communist party. Even after the affiliation to the Comintern, Gramsci was reluctant to fight the Turati reformist wing up to the point of expulsions.

He did not even share Bordiga’s grasp of the need to organise to fight for one’s factional views on a national scale within the PSI.

It is a remarkable fact then that Harman in his pamphlet should skate over the failings of Gramsci and the party with the remark that when it came to valuing the role of Marxist intervention in the class struggle:

“His own activity in 1919-20 and 1924-26 was a shining (although not, of course, perfect) example of such intervention.”¹²

Lenin and Trotsky were much harder on the failings of all sections in the PSI. Trotsky said of the PSI:

“The Party carried on agitation in favour of the soviet power, in favour of the hammer and sickle, in favour of Soviet Russia, etc. The Italian working class en masse took this seriously and entered the road of open revolutionary struggle. But precisely at the moment when the party should have drawn all the practical and political conclusions from its own agitation it became scared of its responsibility and shied away, leaving the rear of the proletariat

unprotected.”¹³

Lenin was equally harsh:

“Did a single communist show his mettle when the workers seized the factories in Italy? No. At the time there was as yet no communism in Italy.”¹⁴

In fact Gramsci retrospectively was a lot harder on himself than Harman is prepared to be. In 1924 he wrote:

In 1919-20 we made extremely serious mistakes which ultimately we are paying for today. For fear of being called upstarts and careerists we did not form a faction and organise this throughout Italy. We were not ready to give the Turin councils an autonomous directive centre, which could have exercised an immense influence throughout the country for fear of a split in the unions and of being prematurely expelled from the Socialist Party.”¹⁵

It was this quality of self-criticism – no matter how closely connected personally to the events and how costly the mistakes proved – a quality possessed by all great revolutionists, that enabled Gramsci to turn to the Comintern.

The formation of the PCI

The failure of the PSI in the revolutionary situation in Italy in 1920 did at least force the left in the party to finally break with the reformist leadership. The Communist Party of Italy (PCI) was finally formed in January 1921 at Livorno. It was established in a period of ebb in the international class struggle; in Italy’s case a period of strengthening reaction and the growth of fascism.

At its founding conference the PCI had between 40,000 and 60,000 members. By the time of Mussolini’s march on Rome (a fascist coup) in October 1922 the party had shrunk to 25,000. Under the impact of the first round of repression that followed membership fell to around 5,000 by early 1923.

In these difficult years the PCI’s leadership found itself in conflict with the Comintern’s leadership as it sought to develop its perspectives for the early 1920s. By the time of the PCI’s formation there had already been two Comintern congresses (1919, 1920). The perspectives and tactics outlined at these had been designed to take full advantage of the crisis of the bourgeoisie in Europe and the weakness of social democracy. It was a time of resolute splits with reformism and the formation of communist parties, of preparing for the seizure of power.

By the time of the PCI’s founding congress and the Comintern’s Third Congress in June-July 1921 the situation was changing. Opportunities had been lost, the bourgeoisie had endured the worst and survived. It gathered confidence and returned to the offensive. Social democracy, despite its treacherous aid to the ruling class, had been strengthened. A re-evaluation of perspectives and tactics was essential.

This reassessment was clearest around the question of the united front tactic. This tactic,

applied by the Bolsheviks in the years leading up to the revolution, was codified and generalised in the Third and Fourth Congresses of the Comintern in 1921 and 1922. With reformism rather than communism in the ascendancy it was essential to break the working class from reformist and centrist organisations.

The resolution on tactics at the Fourth Congress stated:

"The systematically organised international capitalist offensive against all the gains of the working class has swept across the world like a whirl wind . . . is forcing the working class to defend itself.

"There is consequently an obvious need for the united front tactic. The slogan of the Third Congress, 'To the masses', is now more relevant than ever . . . Using the united front tactic means that the communist vanguard is at the forefront of the day to day struggle of the broad masses for their most vital interests. For the sake of this struggle communists are even prepared to negotiate with the scab leaders of the social democrats." ¹⁶

Of course, merciless criticism of the shortcomings and treachery of the leaders of the reformist parties and unions was obligatory if this joint action was to lead to the strengthening of the Communist Party.

The PCI rejected this outlook. Moreover in 1921 there was hardly an ounce of difference in the political outlook of Gramsci and the ultra-left leadership grouped around Amadeo Bordiga. Both resisted attempts to implement fully the Comintern's line of the Third and Fourth Congresses and instead gravitated towards the ultra-left positions of Bukharin who, in Trotsky's words "fought against the policy of the united front and the transitional demands, proceeding from his mechanical understanding of the permanence of the revolutionary process." ¹⁷

In December 1921 the Executive Committee of the Communist International (ECCI) issued a document outlining its united front policy towards the socialist parties and the trade unions. In January 1922 the Comintern published an appeal to the international working class based upon it. A month later an enlarged meeting of the ECCI took place with representatives of the PCI present to discuss the united front question at which the PCI delegates were in a minority.

At the same time as these events the PCI leaders, including Gramsci, drew up theses for the forthcoming Rome Congress of the PCI. They were published in January 1922 and revealed just how far the PCI was from Comintern thinking.

At one level the "Rome Theses" accepted that there was no contradiction between, ". . . participation in the struggles for contingent and limited objectives, and the preparation of the final and general revolutionary struggle." ¹⁸

Indeed, to this end the PCI agreed to participate, ". . . in the organisational life of all forms of the proletariat's economic organisation open to workers of all political faiths

. . . which involves entering into the thick of struggle and action and helping the workers to derive the most useful experience from them." ¹⁹

But the PCI refused to contemplate agreements for common action between different political parties despite the fact that the PSI continued to hold the allegiance of a majority of the vanguard workers in Italy. Whereas the PCI would consider supporting:

"the demands put forward by the left parties . . . of such a kind that is appropriate to call upon the proletariat to move directly to implement them . . . the Communist Party will propose them as objectives for a coalition of trade union organisms, avoiding the setting up of committees to direct the struggle and agitation in which the Communist Party would be represented and engaged alongside other political parties." ²⁰

It believed that only in this way would the PCI remain, "free from any share in responsibility for the activity of the parties which express verbal support for the proletariat's cause through opportunism and with counter-revolutionary intentions." ²¹

This distinction between trade union and political blocs was an artificial one when approached from a correct understanding of the united front. Such an approach agrees to struggle for limited political or economic demands if they mobilise broad layers in a fight for them and their achievement would be a limited gain for the working class, strengthening its political independence and organisation, thus taking the proletariat further along the path of revolution. The communists do not take responsibility for the failure of the socialists in either the economic or the political sphere.

The danger of the PCI approach is that it implies opportunism in relation to the trade union united front, only to be compensated for by a rigid sectarianism in the political field for fear of the consequences of such opportunism on the communist party. For example the "Rome Theses" stated that:

"Communists taking part in struggles in proletarian economic organisms led by socialists, syndicalists or anarchists will not refuse to follow their actions unless the masses as a whole, in a spontaneous movement, should rebel against it." ²²

It is this attitude to spontaneity, embedded in the very foundations of Gramsci's politics, that motivated the PCI's ultra-leftism. Years later Gramsci admitted that such positions were "essentially inspired by Crocean philosophy." ²³ Spontaneous economic or trade union struggles are good in and of themselves and can be followed uncritically. Political struggles, unless under the leadership of the PCI are not. But "bitter polemics" and prophecies of treachery will eventually lead the masses to break with the PSI. Such was the PCI method.

The twin dangers of opportunism and sectarianism come through clearly in a passage from the theses which manages to get the

method of the united front completely the wrong way round:

"It [the PCI] cannot propose a tactic with an occasional and transitory criterion, reckoning that it will be able subsequently, at the moment when such a tactic ceases to be applicable, to execute a sudden switch and change of front, transforming its allies of yesterday into enemies. If one does not wish to compromise one's links with the masses and their reinforcement at the very moment when it is most essential that these should come to the fore, it will be necessary to pursue in public and official declarations and attitudes a continuity of method and intention that is strictly consistent with the uninterrupted propaganda and preparation for the final struggle." ²⁴

For Lenin and Trotsky, the making of principled agreements and the breaking of them when one's "allies" – by their irresoluteness or treachery faced with carrying through this agreement – transform themselves into "enemies" represents precisely a "continuity of method" that prepares the way to the "final struggle".

Gramsci stood by this PCI position through 1922 and the Fourth World Congress and continued his bloc with the Bordigists in the June 1923 Enlarged Executive meeting of the Comintern leadership. This meeting, at which Trotsky and Zinoviev headed a unified Executive delegation, witnessed the PCI majority (including Gramsci) and the minority around Tasca argue out their differences. Trotsky backed Tasca's minority report critical of the record of the PCI leadership.

This report outlined how the PCI had obstructed the Fourth Congress' decision to seek fusion between the PCI and the PSI by imposing ultimatic conditions. While minimising publicity for the call for fusion, the PCI did publish an editorial which characterised the PSI as a "corpse", which of course played into the hands of the anti-fusionists in the PSI who were able to play "on the "patriotism" of workers who feel a certain attachment to their party". ²⁵ The PCI showed just how little they had adopted the united front tactic of Lenin and Trotsky when they further wrote in *Il Lavoratore* in May 1923:

"We conceive the tactic of blocs and of the united front as a means to pursue the struggle against those who betray the proletariat on a new level . . . That is why we have proposed it." ²⁶

As Tasca and the Comintern leadership concluded of Gramsci and the PSI majority:

"The conception which these comrades have of the party and its relations with the masses is perfectly designed to maintain the 'sect' mentality which is one of the most serious defects of our organisation," ²⁷

Gramsci's objections

Beyond his flawed attitude to spontaneity there were other reasons behind Gramsci's opposition to the Comintern's policy. At a conjunctural, tactical level he resisted

it because he felt that the rightist minority in the PCI around Tasca who supported the Comintern theses would be strengthened and that they represented a liquidationist tendency in the PCI who had not fully broken with the politics of the PSI and who resisted the necessary re-orientation to illegal work in conditions of fascist repression. In June 1923 he said that:

“The attitude of the Comintern and the activity of its representatives is bringing disunity and corruption into the communist ranks. We are determined to struggle against the elements who would liquidate our Party.”²⁸

In short, Gramsci is indicating that he felt that it was necessary to bloc with the abstentionists around Bordiga, despite differences with them in order to complete the belated break with reformism and centrism in the period 1921-22. Some confirmation of this is found in a letter he wrote to the PCI leaders inside Italy in February 1924. He argued that he accepted the PCI's “Rome Theses” on tactics, “. . . only for contingent motives of party organisation and declared myself in favour of a united front right through to its normal conclusion in a workers' government.”²⁹

In fact no record of such an opposition at that time exists and this letter was written after Gramsci had changed his position on the Comintern's Fourth Congress resolutions and had decided to break with Bordiga. If true, however, it would have been an unprincipled position to have taken and one which only served to further fatally delay the crystallisation of a truly Bolshevik PCI.

But there is a far deeper reason for Gramsci's unbending attitude to the politics of Lenin and Trotsky in these years. It was based on a conception of differing strategies for the “east” and “west” in Europe. Unless we understand this conception of Gramsci's we cannot grasp how and why he was to change his attitude to the Fourth Congress resolutions without at the same time correcting his false political methodology.

The notion of “east” and “west” was less a question of geography and more a matter of political economy. For Gramsci the “east” consisted of the “backward” capitalist world whereas the “west” was the advanced world of western Europe. This dividing line was essential to Gramsci's opposition to the Comintern. He wrote:

“In Germany the movement tending towards the establishment of a social democratic government is based on the working class masses; but the tactic of the united front has no value except for industrial countries, where the backward workers can hope to be able to carry on a defensive activity by conquering a parliamentary majority. Here [in Italy] the situation is different . . . If we launched the slogan of a workers' government and tried to implement it, we would return to the socialist ambivalence, when the party was condemned to inactivity because it could not decide to be either solely a party of workers or solely a party of peasants . .

. The trade union united front, by contrast, has an aim which is of primary importance for political struggle in Italy . . .

“When one speaks of a political united front, and hence of a workers' government, one must understand a ‘united front’ between parties whose social base is furnished only by industrial and agricultural workers and not by peasants . . .

“In Italy there do not exist, as in Germany, exclusively workers' parties between which a political united front too can be conceived. In Italy the only party with such a character is the Communist Party.”³⁰

After he had broken from Bordiga, Gramsci was to accurately describe the former's rejection of such tactics as based on the reasoning that:

“Since the working class is in a minority in the Italian working population, there is a constant danger that its party will be corrupted by infiltrations from other classes, and in particular from the petit bourgeoisie.”³¹

In the first place this view was profoundly at odds with the conception of an international programme, perspectives and tactics. The united front is a tactic designed to maximise working class unity in a struggle against the bosses and their state.

But the working class finds itself confronted with these tasks across the world wherever it exists. The international character of this fight ensures that the tactic cannot be confined to either the “east” or “west”.

In fact, in those countries where the peasantry is a large class and where imperialism has multiplied the problems of land hunger – such as in Italy – the “political” united front has a greater application. This is so since the peasantry, as a petit bourgeois strata, gives rise to parties outside of the Communist or Socialist Parties with which it is possible to bloc in the fight against the unified camp of industrial capital and the large landholders. Such was the case in Italy.

Such a possibility underwrote the Bolsheviks bloc with the left Social Revolutionaries after October 1917. The fact that in Italy the PSI and PCI were less well embedded in the peasantry of southern Italy than they should have been only meant that the tactic of the united front was more, not less, urgent.

A shift of position?

During the course of 1923-24 the Comintern leadership began to have some success in driving a wedge between Gramsci and Bordiga. Although in a bloc within the PCI, their politics were never identical. Their differences over the factory councils in 1920 was symptomatic of the divergence. The politics of passivity and abstention were the hall mark of Bordiga. Whatever his ultra-leftism this was totally alien to Gramsci who saw the necessity to go beyond passive propagandism, merely stating fundamental truths and waiting for the inevitable process of disillusionment among the workers to benefit the PCI. After the Fourth World Congress in 1922 Bordiga became more

and more intransigent and inward looking. Bordiga's faction refused to serve on the leading committees of the PCI because of their divergences with the Comintern. Gramsci felt this was bound to deliver the PCI into the hands of the minority around Tasca who, Gramsci felt, was an opportunist towards the trade union leaders.

Events inside Italy also convinced Gramsci that passivity on the PCI's part preventing it from intervening in the crisis of the fascist regime. In the spring of 1923 important divisions opened up within the Popular Party which had hitherto firmly backed Mussolini's rule. Significant discontent with this support began to be voiced both in the Popular Party (which had a large peasant following) and increasingly within the urban republican petit bourgeoisie during the course of 1923 and 1924. The PCI needed tactics designed to relate to this discontent in a way that would prevent the republican bourgeoisie and social democracy being the beneficiaries.

Hence Gramsci came to the view, by the close of 1923, that it was impossible to make any concessions to Bordiga. A complete break with him and the creation of a new leadership of the “centre” was essential if the party was to turn to mass work and lead the anti-fascist resistance.

Taken together these considerations pushed Gramsci back towards the Comintern. In September 1923 he abandoned his resistance to the “political” united front in Italy and urged the PCI to adopt the call for a workers' and peasants' government in Italy. To all intents and purposes Gramsci had reconciled himself to the positions of Lenin and Trotsky. In January 1924 he wrote, “I absolutely do not believe that the tactics which have been developed by the Enlarged Executive meeting and the Fourth Congress are mistaken.”³²

He stressed in this letter to Scoccimarro that in launching a fight to redirect the PCI he would “take the doctrine and tactics of the Comintern as the basis for an action programme for activity in the future.”³³

Gramsci articulated his shift in position in a manner that was identical to the arguments of Lenin and Trotsky. In a letter to Togliatti written from Vienna in February 1924 he argued that he could no longer agree with Bordiga on the united front:

“Firstly, because the political conception of the Russian communists was formed on an international and not on a national terrain. Secondly, because in central and western Europe the development of capitalism has not only determined the formation of broad proletarian strata, but also – and as a consequence – has created the higher strata, the labour aristocracy, with its appendages in the trade union bureaucracy and the social democratic groups. The determination, which in Russia was direct and drove the masses onto the streets for a revolutionary uprising, in central and western Europe is complicated by all these political superstructures, created by the greater development of capitalism.

This makes the action of the masses slower and more prudent, and therefore requires of the revolutionary party a strategy and tactics more complex and long term than those that were necessary for the Bolsheviks in the period between March and November 1917.”³⁴

This was a genuine step forward for Gramsci and an important break with the methodology and theoretical justification for his previous position.

Previously, Gramsci had considered that Italy was part of the “east” in which the united front was obsolete. Here he does not simply transfer Italy to the “west” but rather, but much more importantly, he states that the tactic has international relevance. The possibility of avoiding ultra-leftism in the “east” and opportunism in the “west” is at least predicated on such a shift of analysis.

However, the practical consequences of this shift for the PCI in 1924 were less clear to see. In January 1924 the PCI proposed an electoral bloc to the other working class parties for the April 1924 elections. But the terms of this pact were designed to meet with a refusal. Togliatti – leading the party in Italy in Gramsci’s absence – wrote to the Comintern executive that the basis for the propaganda of this pact was that:

“Fascism had opened up a period of permanent revolution for the proletariat, and the proletarian party which forgets this point and helps to sustain the illusion among the workers that it is possible to change the present situation while remaining on the terrain of liberal and constitutional opposition will, in the last analysis, give support to the enemies of the Italian working class and peasantry.”³⁵

Being reformists and constitutionalists the PSI was being asked to abandon its *raison d’être* in order to be in the bloc, something they could hardly be expected to do.

The tragedy of Gramsci is that just as he was breaking with the ultimatum of Bordiga (rejection of the united front on principle) events in the Comintern leadership were to ensure that his complete progress to the positions of Lenin and Trotsky would be derailed.

The rise of Stalinism

Events within the Comintern at the end of 1923 and its repercussions in the Russian party were to cut short Gramsci’s positive evolution. It was the defeat of the German revolution in October 1923 which gave an impetus to Stalinism. Trotsky argued that with this defeat capitalism had secured for itself a period of relative economic and political stabilisation. This unfavourable shift in the international balance of class forces demanded of the Comintern and its sections a recognition that considerable preparatory work was needed in order to win the masses again. He thus placed emphasis firmly on the united front tactic.

On the other hand Zinoviev and Stalin refused to admit that a serious defeat had occurred. On the contrary, they insisted that the Comintern was confronted, especially in

Germany, with an imminent revolutionary situation.

In June 1924 the Fifth Congress of the Comintern backed this ultra-left view. In the same month Stalin took up the pen to contest Trotsky’s view that bourgeois stabilisation was also indicated by a strengthening of social democracy in Europe. Stalin rejected this by claiming that social democracy was a form of fascism:

“It would therefore be a mistake to think that ‘pacifism’ signifies the liquidation of fascism. In the present situation, ‘pacifism’ is the strengthening of fascism with its moderate, social democratic wing being pushed into the foreground.”³⁶

And since fascism and social democracy “do not negate, but supplement each other, they are not antipodes, they are twins”,³⁷ a united front with the leaders of such parties was therefore out of the question. They excluded the use of the united front tactic except “from below”, that is, without the leaders of the reformist and centrist trade unions and political parties. The Fifth Congress declared:

“The tactics of the united front from below are the most important, that is, a united front under communist leadership concerning communist, social democratic, and non-party workers in factory, factory council, trade union.”³⁸

In short it was little more than an ultimatum issued to the rank and file workers in these organisations to abandon their parties unconditionally. Since these workers believed in their leaders it could be seen by them as little more than a trick, and in fact help strengthen social democracy not weaken it.

So just as Gramsci had attained undisputed leadership of the PCI and was moving in the direction of the Comintern’s Fourth Congress positions, the Comintern in effect moved to encompass Gramsci’s own ultra-leftism. The PCI during the autumn of 1924, with Gramsci back in Italy, launched a campaign for workers’ and peasants’ committees and the Peasants’ Defence Association which the PCI ran and was counterposed to the socialist controlled peasants’ trade union federation.

In addition, during 1924 and 1925 the PCI set up Agitational Committees of Proletarian Unity, under their leadership but in open conflict with the unions of the General Workers’ Confederation (CGL). Thus, while Gramsci accepted the applicability of the united front for Italy, it was implemented in the Fifth Congress form. While he moved away from Bordiga’s rejection of the united front in principle, he moved to a position of united front from below.

In fact the Fifth Congress resolutions on tactics and perspectives are pivotal to an understanding of Gramsci’s evolution from 1924 to the conceptions in the Prison Notebooks. While ultra-leftism had held sway since the German defeat, the perspectives before the Congress were more moderated, not least because of the battle waged by Trotsky against

them. In Section 13 of the “Theses on Tactics”, entitled “Two Perspectives”, Zinoviev outlined alternative developments:

“The epoch of international revolution has commenced. The rate of development as a whole or partially, the rate of development of revolutionary events in any particular continent or in any particular country, cannot be foretold with precision. The whole situation is such that two perspectives are open: (a) a possible slow and prolonged development of the proletarian revolution, and (b) on the other hand that the ground under capitalism has been mined to such an extent and that the contradictions of capitalism as a whole have developed so rapidly, that the solution in one country or another may come in the not so distant future.”³⁹

This was a very vague and flexible perspective. On the one side it justified the ultra-leftism then in force and yet it could also serve to justify a right-opportunist turn if necessary. In fact, of course, such a turn did occur in mid-1925. When it came Zinoviev, at the Sixth Plenum of the ECCI in early 1926, used the Fifth Congress resolution to justify it.

The right-centrist turn of 1925 was based on a belated recognition that stability had occurred in Europe. Given this, and given the Stalinist conception that socialism could be built in the Soviet Union if outside intervention could be prevented, the Comintern leadership began the search for alliances in the European countries that could help prevent such intervention. In Britain the Anglo-Russian Committee was set up in 1925 between the Russian and British trade unions with this in mind.

How did this right turn effect Gramsci’s understanding of the united front? At one level Gramsci was capable of formulating the problem of strategy and tactics in a formally correct manner. So in the “Lyon Theses” for the PCI’s Third Congress in January 1926 Gramsci posed the problem in the following way:

“The tactic of the united front as political activity (*manoeuvre*) designed to unmask so-called proletarian and revolutionary parties and groups which have a mass base, is closely linked with the problem of how the Communist Party is to lead the masses and how it is to win a majority. In the form in which it has been defined by the World Congresses, it is applicable in all cases in which, because of the mass support of the groups against which we are fighting, frontal struggle against them is not sufficient to give us rapid and far reaching results . . .

“In Italy, the united front tactic must continue to be utilised by the party, in so far as it is still far from having won a decisive influence over the majority of the working class and the working population.”⁴⁰

At one level this position is correct and a repetition of the statement of early 1924. But taken together with other writings of Gramsci during 1926 it is possible to detect the influence of the right centrist turn in the Comintern which we find amplified in the Prison Note-

books. In a report to the Party's executive in August 1926 on the Italian situation Gramsci drew a distinction once again between "advanced capitalist countries" (England and Germany) and "peripheral states" such as Italy. In the first group "the ruling class possess political and organisational reserves" which means that "even the most serious economic crises do not have immediate repercussions in the political sphere" because the "state apparatus is far more resistant than is often possible to believe."⁴¹

In countries such as Italy "the state forces are less efficient". However, Gramsci does not go on to say, as he did with Bordiga in the early 1920s, that the united front is only applicable in the first case but not the second. On the contrary he maintains that the tactic is applicable in both cases.

The purpose of drawing the distinction is different. In the "peripheral states" there are many intermediate classes between the proletariat and the bourgeoisie. These classes in the Europe of the mid-1920s are being radicalised to such an extent that the tasks of the party and the class are those "between the political and technical preparation of the revolution". In Italy at this time it meant a united front under communist leadership based on a perspective of the imminent demise of Mussolini. In the advanced countries, however, "the problem is still one of political preparation".

Drawing these distinctions is not an idle matter for Gramsci for in each case he is concerned to address a "fundamental problem" namely, "... the problem of transition from the united front tactic, understood in a general sense, to a specific tactic which confronts the concrete problems of national life and operates on the basis of the popular forces as they are historically determined."⁴²

In the case of England, Gramsci argued that the trade unions were the concrete form in which the "popular forces" would operate. And it is at this point that we see the right centrist interpretation that Gramsci gave to the united front where long political preparation is necessary. Despite the experience of the betrayal of the General Strike of 1926, including the lefts in the TUC, Gramsci believed that:

"The Anglo-Russian Committee should be maintained, because it is the best terrain to revolutionise not only the English trade union world, but also the Amsterdam unions. In only one event should there be a break between the communists and the English left: if England was on the eve of the proletarian revolution, and our party was strong enough to lead the insurrection on its own."⁴³

This contrasted sharply with the revolutionary assessment of the role of the Anglo-Russian Committee as expressed by Trotsky after the General Strike:

"... the Politburo majority has pursued a profoundly incorrect policy on the question of the Anglo-Russian Committee. The point at which the working masses of Britain exerted the greatest opposing force to the General Council was when the general

strike was being broken. What was necessary was to keep step with the most active forces of the British proletariat and to break at that moment with the General Council as the betrayer of the general strike ... without this, the struggle for the masses always threatens to turn into an opportunist kowtowing to spontaneity ... The line of the Politburo majority on the question of the Anglo-Russian Committee was clearly a transgression in terms of the revolutionary essence of the united front policy."⁴⁴

On Gramsci's part all this is a reversion away from the international application of the united front that he espoused in early 1924 and back towards a differential application based on the ultimately false division between "east" and "west". At the same time, given he was dealing with England, he reverts to a rightist, an opportunist, variant of this tactic. In a sense all Gramsci was doing was utilising the Fifth Congress positions for his own twin perspectives for the "east" and "west". His position on the Anglo-Russian Committee is a concrete expression of Zinoviev's perspective of the "slow and prolonged development of the proletarian revolution".

Having said this there was still a considerable distance between Gramsci's strategic and tactical prescriptions and those in force in the Comintern under Stalin.

It was precisely in 1926 that Stalin was insisting that in China the Communist Party dissolve itself into the Kuomintang and, under the slogan of "democratic dictatorship of the proletariat and peasantry", abandon the Leninist position of the leading and directing role of the proletariat.

Gramsci at the Lyons Congress in January 1926 recognised that, "The proletariat must struggle to tear the peasants from the bourgeoisie's influence, and place them under its own political guidance."⁴⁵ Indeed, Gramsci insisted to the PCI that given that the weak Italian bourgeoisie rested for its power on the peasantry, this question "is the central point of the political problems which the party must resolve in the immediate future."⁴⁶

He recognised that the slogan of the "workers' and peasants' government" was a way of drawing in the peasantry behind the working class, "the means to transport them onto the terrain of the more advanced proletarian vanguard (struggle for the dictatorship of the proletariat)."⁴⁷

Far from accepting, like Stalin, that the governmental alliance of workers and peasants was distinct stage separate to, and prior to, the struggle for socialism, Gramsci argued that:

"... the party cannot conceive of a realisation of this slogan except as the beginning of a direct revolutionary struggle: i.e. of a civil war waged by the proletariat, in alliance with the peasantry, with the aim of winning power. The party could be led into serious deviations from its task as leader of the revolution if it were to interpret the workers' and peasants' government as corresponding to a real phase

of development of the struggle for power: in other words, if it considered that this slogan indicated the possibility for the problem of the state to be resolved in the interests of the working class in any other form than the dictatorship of the proletariat."⁴⁸

If anything, Gramsci's formulations indicate that right up until his imprisonment he veered in the direction of ultra-leftism.

Captive thoughts

Gramsci's reflections on problems of strategy and tactics in the Prison Notebooks continue his rupture with ultra-leftism. But in its place he developed further the conception that owes its origin to the right centrist turn of 1925-27. The final triumph of fascism in 1926 led Gramsci to reassess his views about the stability and strength of bourgeois rule in the west, including Italy. In the Prison Notebooks he states:

"It seems to me that Ilitch [Lenin] understood a change was necessary, from the war of manoeuvre applied victoriously in the east in 1917, to a war of position, which was the only form possible in the west – when, as Krasnov observes, armies could rapidly accumulate endless quantities of munitions, and where the social structures were of themselves still capable of becoming heavily armed fortifications. This is what the formula of the 'united front' seems to me to mean, and it corresponds to the conception of a single front for the Entente under the sole command of Foch."⁴⁹

Here Gramsci has abandoned the idea he presented in 1926 of the united front tactic as a war of manoeuvre and turned it into a war of position in the west; that is, he has turned the united front into a prolonged strategy through which the party and the class succeed in capturing positions in society, gradually surrounding and laying siege to the state. This is the antithesis of the revolutionary use of the united front as elaborated and practised in the Comintern under the leadership of Lenin and Trotsky.

At one and the same time Gramsci outlines in the Prison Notebooks a simplistically one-sided view of the Russian Revolution, with its absurd implication that the united front was absent from Bolshevik tactical armory and that Lenin led a continuous "revolutionary offensive" against an unfortified Tsarist state; yet he holds to an opportunist view of strategy in the west which sees a seamless united front in operation between the communists and the reformists (and even liberal/democratic bourgeois forces) right up to the seizure of power. Gramsci is unaware that the ends and the means contradict themselves in this view. The seizure of power depends upon the growth in influence of the communist party and this in turn can only be done at the expense of, and in struggle with, the reformists and centrists. This can only occur if common fronts for specific limited actions are combined with ruthless criticism of the limitations of the partners in the alliance of struggle, exposing their half-heartedness and

inconsistencies together with the limitations of their own prescriptions.

Did all this amount to reformism as the Euro-Stalinists insist? Not one bit! Gramsci may have turned a tactic into a strategy but this is not the same as turning revolution into reform. In part, Gramsci's right centrist conception in the Prison Notebooks was an undialectical response to the opposition he maintained to the ultra-left turn of Stalin in 1928-29, about the time he began to write his notebooks. If anything it is a Bukharinite rightist critique of the Third Period that we find in Gramsci's Notebooks. This emphasises the distance between him and Trotsky, but it also serves to underline the gap that separated Gramsci from Stalin.

This gap is further evidenced by the reports of discussions with a fellow prisoner, Athos Lisa, from 1930. Commissioned and then suppressed by Togliatti, they underline that Gramsci objected to the Third Period, could not agree to the expulsion of oppositionists in the PCI and that he retained his belief in the need for an insurrection:

"The violent conquest of power necessitates the creation by the party of the working class of an organisation of a military type, pervasively implanted in every branch of the bourgeois state apparatus, and capable of wounding and inflicting grave blows on it at the decisive moment of struggle."⁵⁰

Gramsci was no longer well enough to write by 1935, the year of the Stalinist Comintern's definitive passage from bureaucratic centrism into counter-revolution and reformism. The signing of the Stalin-Laval Pact in that year gave a green light for the French Stalinists to embrace patriotism with the full backing of the Kremlin. There is nothing in Gramsci's life or work which can give comfort to today's Euro-Stalinists in their attempt to turn Gramsci into the patron saint of the popular front.

Quite the contrary. In a couple of striking passages by Gramsci in 1926, he explicitly argues against a popular front to defeat fascism in a manner which almost anticipates the apologetic arguments of Togliatti ten years later about Spain. He disputes the arguments of the bourgeoisie who, "... have an interest in maintaining that fascism is a pre-democratic regime: that fascism is related to an incipient and still backward phase of capitalism."⁵¹

This leads to the view that:

"The best tactic is one whose aim is, if not an actual bourgeois-proletarian bloc for the constitutional elimination of fascism, at least a passivity of the revolutionary vanguard, a non-intervention of the Communist Party in the immediate political struggle, thus allowing the bourgeoisie to use the proletariat as electoral troops against fascism."⁵²

Whereas:

"For us communists, the fascist regime is the expression of the most advanced stage of capitalist society. It precisely serves to demonstrate how all the conquests and all the institutions which the toiling classes succeed in realising ... are destined for annihila-

tion, if at a given moment the working class does not seize state power with revolutionary means."⁵³

"Permanent revolution" or "socialism in one country"?

There is still another way to judge Gramsci's evolution. What was his attitude to the theoretical underpinnings of centrism in the Comintern – "socialism in one country" – and to its revolutionary critique – "permanent revolution"?

His passages in the Prison Notebooks on these questions give no support to the arguments of those, like Perry Anderson, who see an affinity between the positions of Gramsci and Trotsky in their respective critiques of the ultra-leftism of Stalin after 1928.

The truth is that Gramsci, from the middle of 1924, is a savage critic of Trotsky's theory. The last favourable reference to Trotsky on this score occurs in February 1924. He sympathetically surveys the Opposition's attacks on bureaucracy in the USSR and says further:

"It is well known that in 1905, Trotsky already thought a socialist and working class revolution could take place in Russia while the Bolsheviks only aimed to establish a political dictatorship of the proletariat allied to the peasantry that would serve as a framework for the development of capitalism, which was not to be touched in its economic structure. It is well known that in November 1917 Lenin ... and the majority of the party had gone over to Trotsky's view and intended to take over not merely political power but also economic power."⁵⁴

Yet within six months, by the time of the Fifth World Congress, Gramsci had abandoned this view and gone over to the faction of the Stalin/Zinoviev/Kamenev troika. The immediate impetus to this is Gramsci's attitude to factional activity:

"Trotsky's conceptions ... represent a danger inasmuch as the lack of party unity, in a country in which there is only one party, splits the state. This produces a counter-revolutionary movement; it does not, however, mean that Trotsky is a counter-revolutionary, for in that case we would ask for his expulsion.

"Finally, lessons should be drawn from the Trotsky question for our party. Before the last disciplinary measures, Trotsky was in the same position as Bordiga is at present in our party."⁵⁵

This tragic mistake, namely, a right-opportunist identification of Marxism as ultra-leftism, is repeated and amplified many times in the Prison Notebooks. In the fervour of his own 1924 break with Bordiga he was only too willing to side with the majority in the CPSU in the campaign, launched at the Fifth Congress, of "Bolshevisation". This was in fact the first step in the strangling of inner-party life in the communist parties and led Gramsci into opposing all factional activity.

While as late as October 1926 Gramsci was

still prepared to argue for disciplinary leniency with regard to the Joint Opposition, by the early 1930s he argued that:

"The tendency represented by Lev Davidovitch [Trotsky] was closely connected to this series of problems ... an over-resolute (and therefore not rationalised) will to give supremacy in national life to industry and industrial methods, to accelerate through coercion, from outside the growth of discipline and order in production, and to adapt customs to the necessities of work. Given the general way in which all the problems connected with this tendency were conceived it was destined necessarily to end up in Bonapartism. Hence the inexorable necessity of crushing it."⁵⁶

Given this attitude and assessment it was not surprising that Gramsci would review his 1924 attitude towards Trotsky's theory of permanent revolution:

"Bronstein [Trotsky] in his memoirs recalls being told that his theory had been proved true ... fifteen years later ... In reality his theory, as such was good neither fifteen years earlier nor fifteen years later. As happens to the obstinate ... he guessed more or less correctly; that is to say, he was right in his more general prediction. It is as if one was to prophesy that a little four year old girl would become a mother, and when at twenty she did one said "I guessed that she would" – overlooking the fact that, however, when she was four years old one had tried to rape the girl, in the belief that she would become a mother even then."⁵⁷

This rejection of what he understands to be Trotsky's theory is at the heart of his overall strategic and tactical conceptions in the Prison Notebooks. Thus the:

"... political concept of the so-called 'permanent revolution' which emerged before 1848 as a scientifically evolved expression of Jacobin experience from 1789 to Thermidor. The formula belongs to an historical period in which the great mass political parties and the great economic trade unions did not yet exist, and society was still, so to speak, in a state of fluidity from many points of view: greater backwardness of the countryside, and almost complete monopoly of political and state power by a few cities or even by a single one (Paris in the case of France); a relatively rudimentary state apparatus, and greater autonomy of civil society from state activity; a specific system of military forces and of national armed services; greater autonomy of the national economies from the economic relations of the world market, etc. In the period after 1870, with the colonial expansion of Europe, all these elements change: the internal and international organisational relations of the state become more complex and massive, and the Forty-Eightist formula of the 'permanent revolution' is expanded and transcended in political science by the formula of 'civil hegemony'. The same thing happens in the art of politics as happens in military art; war of movement increasingly becomes war

of position, and it can be said that a state will win a war in so far as it prepares for it minutely and technically in peacetime.”⁵⁸

So Trotsky is accused of being behind the times regarding strategy for the advanced west. He accuses Trotsky of being “the political theorist of frontal attack in a period when it only leads to defeats.”⁵⁹

Such a conception forms the basis of modern day Euro-Stalinism’s critique of Trotskyism.

The first thing that needs to be said is that Gramsci’s exposition, which equates “permanent revolution” with frontal attack or war of movement, has got nothing to do with Trotsky’s theory. Trotsky took as his point of departure the combined, uninterrupted, character of the bourgeois and proletarian revolutions in certain situations. So Trotsky could not, and did not, apply this aspect of his theory to the “west” where the bourgeois revolution had been completed in all essentials.

If anyone was guilty of the conceptions that Gramsci accuses Trotsky of holding then it is Bukharin at the Third and Fourth Congresses, “who held to his standpoint of the scholastic permanence of both the economic crisis and the revolution as a whole.”⁶⁰

Gramsci agreed with Bukharin at the time. It could also be a conception attributable to Zinoviev and Stalin at the Fifth Congress, again which Gramsci did not dissent from.

The painful truth is that Gramsci held a position between 1922 and 1924 not dissimilar to the one he criticises here. He argued that the collapse of the fascist regime was both imminent and could not give way to a transitional regime of bourgeois democracy. In January 1924 he maintained that, “in reality fascism has posed a very crude sharp dilemma in Italy: that of the permanent revolution, and of the impossibility not only of changing the form of the state, but even of changing the government, other than by armed force.”⁶¹

After his ultra-left illusions were weakened with his break with Bordiga, and shattered for good with the final triumph of Mussolini in 1926, Gramsci altered his strategic conception to the right; but while attacking Trotsky’s theory he was in reality attacking his own ultra-left past.

The fact that Gramsci identified his own previous stance with that of Trotsky can only be explained by the fact that he accepted completely the Stalinist lies about “Trotskyism” pushed in the Comintern after 1923. If Trotsky indeed had been guilty, as the Stalinists, claimed of advocating a “leap over” the bourgeois stage of the Russian Revolution, if Trotsky had indeed “underestimated the peasantry”, as his opponents insisted, thus giving the Russian Revolution a purely “socialist” working class character, then Gramsci’s jibes may have had some point. But they were not true. If anything it was Gramsci who “underestimated the peasantry” in his ultra-left period.

A national road

Nor did Gramsci remain silent on the other issue at stake between Trotsky and Stalin while in prison. He wrote several passages on the methodological questions at stake in the dispute over “socialism in one country” which is intimately connected with the question of permanent revolution. He reasoned as follows:

“Do international relations precede or follow (logically) fundamental social relations? There can be no doubt that they follow. Any organic innovation in the social structure, through its technical military expression, modifies organically absolute and relative relations in the international field too. Even the geographical position of a national State does not precede but follows (logically) structural changes, although it also reacts back upon them to a certain extent (to the extent precisely to which superstructures react upon the structure, politics on economics, etc).”⁶²

Gramsci gets it all upside down. By “fundamental social relations” he means capitalist relations of production. He counterposes these to “international relations” and thereby implicitly argues that capitalism is nationally defined. Having done that it is then possible, argues Gramsci, to examine the relations between the national and international. By analogy the international relations are the “superstructures and the national the “base”. This is the starting point for Stalin’s “socialism in one country”.

Marxism reasons in an opposite fashion. It starts from the fact that capitalism is a world entity and its relations encompass the globe. National economies can be examined and are determined in this light.

For Gramsci, starting with the “national” played the same role as starting from the “uneven” nature of world economy instead of the “uneven and combined” nature of that economy as Trotsky did. Gramsci, like Stalin, felt that this was the only way to appreciate what was “unique”, and “specific” about a particular country at a particular time:

“In reality, the internal relations of any nation are the result of a combination which is ‘original’ and (in a certain sense) unique: these relations must be understood and conceived in their originality and uniqueness if one wishes to dominate them and direct them. To be sure the line of development is towards internationalism, but the point of departure is ‘national’ – and it is from this point of departure that one must begin. Yet the perspective is international and cannot be otherwise . . . The leading class is in fact only such if it accurately interprets this combination – of which it is itself a component and precisely as such is able to give the moment a certain direction, within certain perspectives. It is on this point in my opinion, that the fundamental disagreement between Lev Davidovitch [Trotsky] and Vissarionovitch [Stalin] as interpreter of the majority movement [Bolshevism] really hinges. The accusations of nationalism are inept if they refer to the

nucleus of the question. If one studies the majoritarian struggle from 1902 to 1917, one can see that its originality consisted in purging internationalism of every vague and purely ideological (in the perjorative sense) element, to give it a realistic political content. It is in the concept of hegemony that those exigencies which are national in character are knotted together.”⁶³

Thus for Gramsci, Lenin’s “democratic dictatorship of the proletariat and peasantry” was hegemonic and national, while the theory of “permanent revolution” was incapable of grasping and dealing with the specific realities of Russian society.

Of course, Trotsky did precisely what Gramsci accuses him of failing to achieve. Trotsky’s analysis of Russia was based on a detailed examination of its history and specific social relations. In his work, *Results and Prospects*, from 1906 Trotsky compares and contrasts the Russia of 1905 to France of 1870 and Germany of 1848 on the basis of tracing the evolution of international developments.

Then he was able to outline in a remarkable manner the specific features that were present in Tsarist Russia which destined Russia to experience a socialist revolution before the “advanced” and “mature” countries and yet be unable to sustain it without international help.

Since the national is a specific combination of the international trends it is precisely impossible to really grasp the national without first understanding the international.

The connection between Gramsci’s view of the relation between national and international relations and the strategic and tactical tasks of the working class are fully revealed. Only the national is specific and hegemonic; what separates countries is more important than what connects them. Hence, although Italy and England can in one period be very different types of nation and then later in the same camp, the fact is that different types of united front are applicable depending on which type of country we are dealing with; united front from below and a war of manoeuvre in the “backward” or “peripheral” states, a strategic united front and a war of position in the advanced capitalist countries. Only briefly, in early 1924, having decided to break politically with Bordiga did Gramsci pose the problem correctly. But these insights were not sustained and Gramsci surrendered to rightism.

Conclusion

The prosecutor at Gramsci’s trial demanded that any sentence “stop this brain working for twenty years”. They failed. But it has now stopped working for fifty years. Many are eager to claim him as their own. This hagiographical attitude to the greatest of Italian revolutionists would have appalled Gramsci.

We approach Gramsci’s political life critically. By breaking with the ultra-leftism of Bordiga in 1923-24 Gramsci set himself the conscious project of steering the infant and

repressed PCI between the ultra-leftism of Bordiga and the opportunism of Tasca. In doing so his goal was to return to the positions of the revolutionary Comintern of Lenin.

In trying to reach that goal Gramsci was responsible for a considerable body of perceptive work on the errors of Bordigism, on the history, class structure and strategic problems of Italian society. Every revolutionary militant today will find much in his work that is valuable and inspiring.

But Gramsci failed to build Bolshevism in Italy precisely because the bureaucratic centrist "Bolshevisation" of Stalin and Zinoviev intersected his evolution. In the period up until his arrest, this ensured that a PCI under Gramsci's direction failed to expunge a milder form of ultra-leftism in Italy and an affinity for the growing right opportunism in the "west". In prison his further reflections, based on a one-sided rejection of his own ultra-leftism and nurtured by the Stalinists' myth about Trotsky, led Gramsci further into the camp of right centrism. Gramsci did not so much expand the boundaries of Marxism but rather narrowed its concerns. His insights were often not unique, once they transgressed the bounds of Italian history and society and were often overly abstract and even ambiguous. In the historical period that opens with the degeneration of the USSR it is Trotskyism, not Gramscism, that stands on the shoulders of Leninism and makes Marxism taller by a head.

Despite that, during this, the fiftieth year since Gramsci's cruel and painful death, we can find inspiration in his life and struggle. We can only hope to preserve him from the grasp of his "friends".

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Trotsky and Gramsci: A posthumous dialogue

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Antonio Gramsci, as much as Trotsky, was an heir of the thought of the Comintern before its Stalinist degeneration. This was the greatest revolutionary working-class organization ever, at a time when Marxism was having its heyday. Whereas present-day Trotskyism represents some kind of feeble continuity with that revolutionary movement of the pre-World War II period, Gramsci's thought endured a more disgraceful fate. In the postwar years, the Italian CP led by Palmiro Togliatti -and Euro-Communism later on- seized upon it in order to articulate a strategy that involved brazen support for the bourgeois regime (a theoretical operation that Stalinism could have never done with Trotsky's legacy). Since then, Gramsci has become the subject of a scholar readership in the academic milieu, resorted to by all kinds of self-seekers and governmental officials. In this article, we dwell on what we believe are the shortcomings in Gramsci's views, but we are nevertheless aware that as much as Stalinism does not represent in the least a continuity with Bolshevism, but its counter-revolutionary degeneration, so current followers of Gramsci cannot claim to be his legitimate heirs. In fact, many of them have become 'organic intellectuals' for the bourgeoisie or else are advisors of the union bureaucracy.

We are in no way the first ones to try and draw a critical parallel between Trotsky's thought and Gramsci's. Perry Anderson, from the standpoint of academic Marxism, opened up a debate around the ambiguities enshrined in Gramsci's key concept of hegemony. That was a pioneer work, in which Trotsky's views are dealt with¹, but the Trotskyists, alas, failed to build on it. The main thrust of our approach is two confront both theoretical systems taken as a whole, contrasting their particular concepts in the process, i.e., the concept of capitalist equilibrium and the theory of permanent revolution in Trotsky's case; the relationship between Gramsci's war of maneuver-war of position, and also the uses of his notion of passive revolution. The latter, we believe, has been rather underestimated by revolutionary Marxists. The first result of contrasting both theoretical perspectives is the

emergence of new concepts, while others gain in dialectical richness, allowing a better understanding of the complex world scenario that took shape in the aftermath of World War II -the period of the so-called 'Yalta Order'. This saw consolidation of the hegemony of US imperialism on the world, and the abhorrent grip of Stalinism over most of the world working class movement in the wake of the defeat of Nazi-fascism. We are trying to elucidate new theoretical weapons that should enable us to a deeper understanding of 'how the ruling class ruled' in the past, and also look into the basis that nourished a new mass reformism in the aftermath of the World War II. We do so to try and work out, from a militant standpoint, those mechanisms hampering revolution, and thus fight against reformism. Above all, contrasting the views of Trotsky and Gramsci -both set against the period of heightened class struggle that elapsed between the two world wars- should enable us to chart the relationships between the three cataclysmic events of our imperialist epoch, i.e., capitalist crises, wars and revolutions -especially their future dynamics.

The period between the two wars

No matter how unstable or solid the US position in the world today might look, the hegemony of US imperialism appears to us as some sort of 'natural phenomenon'. But this was not the case at the beginning of the twentieth century, nor did the conquest of its preponderant role come about as a 'natural' evolution. Far from it, it was settled in an interregnum that proved Lenin's dictum (the period ushered in by the World War I is an 'epoch of crises, war and revolution') was right through and through. Right from the beginning of that phase, revolutionary Marxism was confronted with a big challenge, i.e. trace a fundamental shift in world politics -the advent of US imperialism's hegemony in place of Britain's old rule. How did that change come about? What were the reasons at work behind it?

A Marxist economist, Isaac Joshua, summed up the period between the two world wars and the Great Depression along these lines: 'The bankruptcy of the gold standard showed the sterling crisis was a milestone in the depression of the '30s. A

sterling crisis that has appeared to us as a crisis of hegemony, or for the sake of precision, a crisis of 'between two': Britain can no longer play its old role, whereas the US is not able to take over yet. The US prevents Britain from continuing with 'business as usual'; the US, in turn, was being blocked by Britain in its attempt to gain the upper hand. Once again, the First World War played its part in all this: it accelerated a development which would have unfolded nonetheless, turning what were then gaps in the building into massive cracks. It put the question on top of the agenda, but it failed to work it out properly. History opened up a period of latency, and the boat was left without command, drifting afloat at the mercy of the winds.'

Joshua also remarks: 'In 1918 (...) the strong contenders were not strong enough yet, whereas the weak players were not weak enough, either. In its international dimension, the great crisis is clearly one of 'between two', between a First World War that contented itself to put the big issues on the order of the day, and a Second World War that worked them out' in the direction of American hegemony.²

Such was the nature of the period in which both Trotsky and Gramsci's revolutionary activity took place -a period that will thus provide the setting for the parallel between their views.

Let us say, firstly, that the first common ground we find between Leon Trotsky and Antonio Gramsci is that both highlighted the new role of the US³ as a major world player superseding a declining Britain. They both grappled with this issue using the same approach: the law of productivity of labor.

Speaking on the superiority of American capitalism, Trotsky stated that 'The law of productivity of labor is of fundamental importance for the relationships between America and Europe, and to ascertain the future position of the US in the world. That superior application of the law of productiv-

2. Isaac Joshua, *The 1929 Crash and the Emergence of the US*

3. 'The Russian émigré said that since 1917, he had frequently claimed that world capital would unfurl 'under the increasing hegemony of the US, first and foremost the hegemony of the dollar over the British sterling pound', held an article of March 1933 published in *The New York Times*, based on an interview by Associated Press to Trotsky in Prinkipo.

1. Cf. *The Antinomies of Antonio Gramsci*, Perry Anderson. Another comparative study is Roberto Mazzari's *Trotsky and Gramsci*, from which we quote in this article.

ity of labor by the Yankees has come to be known as chain, standardized or mass production. They seem to have found the point of leverage sought by Archimedes to turn the world upside-down.⁴

Gramsci reflected along the same lines. 'What is the fulcrum for the new world that is coming into life?' And he replies that the answer lies in 'The world of production, labor'.

That is why he focused on studying Fordism, to which he described as the industrial policy pursued by the most dynamic quarters of the American bourgeoisie in order to 'reach an organization of a programmed economy' in which 'the new methods of labor are inextricably linked to a peculiar way of living, of thinking and of feeling life.' All these heralded a new culture: 'Americanism'.⁵

'Both Americanism and Fordism -claims Gramsci- flow from an inherent drive to achieve the organization of a planned economy (...) the transition from the old economic individualism to a planned economy'.

And he goes on to say that the US 'shrewdly combined the force (smashing the labor unionism on a territorial basis [trade unions]) with persuasion (high wages, substantial social benefits, a very clever ideological and political propaganda) in order to rationalize both the production and labor; it therefore was able to make the whole life of the country revolve around production itself. The hegemony flows from the factory itself and is exerted through a few professional intermediaries coming from the political and ideological spheres.'

Besides this common awareness of America's superiority relying on the productivity of labor, they start from a similar definition of the aftermath of World War I. Both brand it as an 'unstable equilibrium' or else a 'relative stabilization' of capitalism. This concept appears in the report delivered by Trotsky to the III Congress of the Comintern in 1921. Such view, later on adopted by the Comintern, was common to both revolutionaries.

Its definition reads as follows: 'Capitalist equilibrium is a complex phenomenon; the capitalist regime brings about such equilibrium, then breaks it up, only to restore it and undo it again, enhancing, in the process, the foundations of its domination. In the economic sphere, the slumps and upsurges of activity are disruptions and restorations of equilibrium itself. In the sphere of class relationships, a break-up of equilibrium results in strikes, lock-outs, in revolutionary fights. In the sphere of the relationships between the states, the disruption of equilibrium leads to war as a rule; or it might also lead to a concealed tariff war, economic warfare or a blockade. Capitalism, therefore, relies on an unstable equilibrium that comes apart

every now and then, only to be restored later on. At the same time, such equilibrium is highly enduring: the best proof bearing testimony to this is the continued existence of the capitalist world.'

Far from any kind of economic determinism, Trotsky holds that 'the analysis of the economic conditions and tendencies and the political state of affairs worldwide as a whole should be the starting point, considering it as a totality with its own relationships and contradictions, i.e., with a mutual dependence opposing its components between themselves'.⁶

Trotsky's thought stood accused of sharing the same economically deterministic view than the II International⁷. However, the originality of his approach lies in the fact that he incorporates the role of subjective factors as decisive elements shaping the evolution of the capitalist economy. Let us cast all the doubts aside: 'If we are asked, "What guarantee is there that capitalism will not restore its equilibrium through cyclical upswings?" then we would answer: 'There are none and there cannot be any'. If we do away with the revolutionary nature of the working class and its struggle, and dismiss the work of the Communist Party within the unions...and take into account only the objective mechanisms of capitalism, we might then say: "Naturally, should a working class intervention fail, should its struggle, its resistance, its self-defense and its offensives all fail, capitalism will succeed in restoring its own equilibrium, not the old one but a

new kind of equilibrium.'

Gramsci, on his part, hammers out the concept of 'organic crisis', which he applies to the nation-state in the main. However, such concept has some similarities with Trotsky's 'disruption of capitalist equilibrium', which he resorts to for dealing with the analysis of the international scenario.⁸

Gramsci, when trying to appraise the balance of forces, points out that, 'Another question is to determine whether the economic crises directly cause those deep-going crisis of historical magnitude. (...) The economic crises can be considered not to provoke, by themselves, fundamental developments; they just might bring in a fertile soil for new ways of thinking, of posing and working out those issues related to the further evolution of state life. (...) At any rate, a disruption in the balance of forces does not occur due to immediate causes, such as the impoverishment of the social group with an interest to break up the equilibrium, and does so indeed; quite otherwise, this disruption occurs in the arena of conflicts standing right above the economic field and are related to a class 'prestige' (future economic interest), to an intensified wish for independence, autonomy and power altogether'.⁹

Starting from this theoretical ground -which we can brand as economic anticatastrophism- common to both Trotsky and Gramsci in the 1920s¹⁰, let us examine now the perspectives they envisaged for the international situation in the period ahead.

A 'passive revolution'

In a survey of Gramsci's thought, we come across the following statement: 'It is important to bear in mind Gramsci's remark that the contemporary historical period, that which followed World War I, can be studied

8. There is a clear continuity between Lenin and Trotsky in the approach to analyze the balance of forces within any given nation. He builds upon Lenin's views on the 'situations'. As he points out in a methodological section in *Wither France?*, they never appear to us as 'pure entities': 'All throughout history we come across stable situations, completely non-revolutionary ones. We also find notoriously revolutionary situations. There are also counter-revolutionary situations (we should never forget this!). But what we come across by and large in our epoch of a decaying capitalism are intermediate situations, transitional ones -between a non-revolutionary and a pre-revolutionary situation, between a pre-revolutionary and a revolutionary situation...or else a counter-revolutionary one. It is precisely those transitional states the ones that are fundamentally important from the standpoint of our political strategy.'

9. Notes on Machiavelli, on Politics and the Modern State

10. We will see below that Trotsky, after the 1929 crash, used the same methodological criteria to connect the economic crisis, the class struggle and inter-state contradictions, to define that a new 'catastrophic phase' (in Gramsci's words) was opening up in the 1930s, combining revolutionary undertakings with the drift of the imperialist countries towards WWII.

4. Leon Trotsky, *Nationalism and the Economy*, November 1933

5. Antonio Gramsci, *Americanism and Fordism*

6. Critique of the International Left Opposition to the Comintern program, 1927

7. Such relatively economic deterministic can be clearly observed in this excerpt taken from the Erfurt Program of the II International led by Engels: 'the private property of the means of production has changed...from a driving force for progress, it has become a cause for social decline and bankruptcy. Its demise is inevitable. The only question left unanswered is: will the system of private ownership of the means of production be allowed to plunge the entire social system into an abyss? Or else, will society get rid of this burden, and then, strong and free, it will take back the path leading to progress, in line with the ways prescribed by evolution? (...) The productive forces that have been created within the capitalist society are at odds with the property system underpinning them. The strive to maintain such system makes any future social development impossible, condemning the society to stagnation and decay (...) The capitalist social system has gone a long way; its demise is now just a matter of time. The irresistible forces at work in the economy are inexorably bound to provoke the collapse of capitalist production altogether. The ascent of a new social order superseding the existing one is no longer a desirable purpose; it has rather become inevitable (...) As things stand today, the capitalist civilization cannot go on like this any longer; we should either advance towards socialism; or else fall back into barbarism (...) The history of mankind is determined not by the ideas, but by an economic development that advances untrammelled, abiding certain underlying laws, not our wishes or whims (...)'

and appraised starting from the concept of 'passive revolution'. In the wake of the cataclysm created by the imperialist war, and the deep-going crisis that followed, which was brought to a close with the defeat of the proletarian revolution in the Western world, a whole epoch seemed to be drawing to a close. In fact, the bourgeoisie had managed to hold the reins of the situation and to neutralize the revolutionary forces, in spite of the fierce resistance put up by them. That is why the period of a 'relative stabilization' of capitalism seemed to be more than a mere short-lived parentheses.¹¹

As a matter of fact, Gramsci was at the time wondering 'whether Americanism might grow into a whole historical epoch, i.e., whether it might bring about a piecemeal development in line with (...) those 'passive revolutions' of the last century (...) or quite otherwise, whether French-styled uprisings like Russia's will burst out.'¹² He opposed that likely development to those 'revolutions from above' that Marx and Engels had already described in the past.

Gramsci's concept of a 'passive revolution'¹³ stemmed from three different sources. The idea of a shift within the ruling classes through a 'revolution from above' as a result of a mass movement can be traced back to Marx himself, as much as we can pinpoint Trotsky's 'permanent revolution' in Marx's own works -although none of them come to mean exactly the same in the imperialist epoch and in the nineteenth century. Marx and Engels stated that in the wake of Louis Bonaparte's coup in France in 1851, 'The period of revolutions from below had come to an end, at least for the time being; this was followed by a period of revolutions from above'. The restoration of the Empire in France at the behest of Bonaparte, and 'his follower, Bismarck' who 'staged a coup d'état and started his own revolution from above in 1866' in Prussia, bore testimony to

that.¹⁴

Proceeding along the same lines, Gramsci was to conclude that, as much as the period of bourgeois revolutions stretching from the 1789 Great French Revolution to 1848 was followed by a period of 'revolutions from above', the 1917 Bolshevik revolution -the 'France' of the time- might be followed by a phase of passive revolutions. This appraisal by Gramsci of the relationship between the upswing of revolution and the backlash unleashed by counter-revolution, along with the changes operated in the modern democratic states of the Western world is at the root of a notorious dictum. He held that 'the 1848 formula of 'permanent revolution' is developed and overcome in the realm of political science by that of a 'civil hegemony'¹⁵, due to the fact that 'the organizational relationships of the state, both at home and abroad, have become more complex and solid'. In the same way, both Fordism and Americanism, with the transformations within the state that they brought in, will then mean an attempt at developing the productive forces relying on the relative stabilization achieved by capitalism in the 1920s. This will be done by means of halting the revolutionary tide sweeping the world, especially Europe, in the aftermath of the October Revolution -that is why Gramsci calls the passive revolution a 'revolution-restoration' as well.

Secondly, Gramsci drew the concept from Italian history itself. 'The concept of passive revolution in the sense that Vincenzo Cuoco branded the first period of the Risorgimento'.¹⁶ Gramsci stretched the concept, to make it encompass the whole period of national unification starting in 1848-49 and culminating in 1871 with the annexation of Rome as the capital city of Italy. The unification of Italy as a bourgeois nation was achieved within the limits dictated by the alliance between the Northern bourgeoisie with the landowners in the South, which prevented the distribution of land -or concessions- among the peasantry, in stark contrast with the deep-going agrarian reform carried out by the French revolution. Thus, the party of the so-called Moderates accomplished a historically progressive task, such as the unification of Italy, in a reactionary manner, whereas the Piedmont army and its state were the forces standing behind it. This brought about a 'diplomatization of the revolution', in stark opposition to the French model. The bourgeoisie had resorted to 'transformism', a ruse designed to assimilate, co-opt and transform the more radical-minded leaders of the people active in the Action Party, by subordinating them to the program of the Moderate wing. In this way, they were prevented from playing

an active, Jacobin role, and caved in to the right wing of the movement. A 'passive revolution', negotiated from above -such was the perspective Gramsci was warning against now, in the epoch of proletarian revolution, one that might turn out to be a bourgeois brake on the socialist revolution.¹⁷

Finally, Gramsci resorts to this concept in the face of a burning political necessity: articulate a response vis-à-vis the rise of Fascism. Gramsci totally disagrees with the evaluation made by the PCI as to Mussolini's chances of succeeding. Trotsky will state in this regard: 'According to reports delivered by the Italian comrades, the Communist Party, apart from Gramsci, did not envisage in the least the likelihood of Fascism taking power'.¹⁸

Although he was more far-sighted in the analysis of this development -the big scale mobilization of the middle classes against the proletariat- Gramsci shared Bordiga's ultra-leftist view in the first years. It was only in 1924 that he agreed to the workers' united front tactic advocated by Trotsky and the Comintern to fight back Fascism in Italy.¹⁹ Some years later, he will reject -like

11. Cr Aguilera Prat, Gramsci and the National Way to Socialism

12. Antonio Gramsci, Notebooks from Prison

13. The concept of "passive revolution" must be deducted in a rigorous manner from the two fundamental principles of political science [taken from Marx's Introduction to the Critique of Political Economy]: a) no social formation disappears insofar as the productive forces that have grown within it still find a fertile soil for its further evolution; b) a society only undertakes those tasks for whose solution the necessary conditions have already aroused, etc. Obviously, those principles have to unfold to the full up to its critical point, and should be ridden from the slightest shred of fatalism and mechanicism'. This quotation, taken from Gramsci's Notes on Machiavelli, on Politics and on the Modern State is very abstract and general. It might lead to misinterpretations, such as the reformists' claim that the defeat of any given revolution could be attributed to the 'objective conditions' (they would even call it 'premature'), thus underplaying the concrete actions of the leaderships of the working class movement and the masses, and their results therein.

14. Engels' introduction to Karl Marx's The Class Struggle in France.

15. On the concept of revolution in both Gramsci and Trotsky, see next article

16. Gramsci, ibidem

17. As Aguilera de Prat correctly points out in this key regard (and to dissipate in passing some prejudices), for Gramsci, 'At any rate, it is all about having a dialectical approach to that notion that should not be turned into a program for political intervention [he refers to the program of passive revolution] as it was the case with the Moderates in the Risorgimento. It is only a methodological criterion for interpretation.

18. In relation with the Italian CP in the face of Mussolini's rise to power, Trotsky stated: 'The Italian Communist Party came to life almost at the same time as Fascism. But the very same revolutionary ebbing conditions that led Fascism into power are the obstacles hindering the Communist Party. The Party did not realize the proportions of the Fascist danger; it got held in revolutionary illusions; it was recklessly hostile to the united front tactic; in a word, it was infected by all the infantile disorders. Small wonder: it was only two years old. For it, Fascism represented just a 'capitalist reaction'. The Italian Communist Party failed to notice the real physiognomy of Fascism, derived from the mobilization of the petty bourgeoisie against the proletariat. According to the reports I received from our Italian comrades, The Italian Communist Party, with the sole exception of Gramsci, did not admit in the least that Fascism might seize power. Besides, we should not forget that the Italian Fascism was, at that time, a new phenomenon, which was barely coming to life. To fathom out its specific features would have been no easy task, not even for an experienced party.'

19. Roberto Massari, in his work Trotsky and Gramsci, reminds us that: 'On November 22, 1922, Lenin dictated Trotsky the following message (on the phone): 'As far as Bordiga is concerned, Y enthusiastically support the proposal (Trotsky's) of sending a letter drafted by our Central Committee to the Italian delegates, and recommend persistently the tactic you are recommending. Contrariwise, his actions will be extremely harmful, in the future, for the Italian communists' (...) 'The tactic indicated by Trotsky and by most Comintern leaders to the

Trotsky- the orientation of the Stalin-led Comintern that came to be known as the 'third period', i.e., the outright rejection of any kind of cooperation or united front with the Socialist Party and the reformist labor organizations, considered then to be a strand of 'social-Fascism.'

Hence, his emphasis on the concept of 'passive revolution', in order to appraise what was going on along different lines and deliver an according response, more in line with the needs of the mass movement. The unheard-of phenomenon of Italian Fascism did not boil down to a violent suppression of labor, but it also tried to gain a new consensus from the Italian masses. Even after the 1929 crash, a strand of Fascism takes issue with liberal economics, and develops the hypothesis of a 'rationalization-reorganization' of the forces of production, an Italian version of 'Americanism' via 'corporativism' that sets up a kind of 'union between the government of the masses and the management of production'. Gramsci regards it as an attempt at overcoming the 'organic crisis' weighing down on the state.

Having said all this, we are led to conclude that a passive revolution in the imperialist epoch would result in a 'transformation of the economic structure along reformist lines, going from an individualistic to a planned economy (managed economy), and the coming to life of a 'in-between economy' halfway from the purely individualistic type and a wholesome planned economy' -the latter meaning socialist planning. The bourgeoisie accomplished this 'in-between' economy by means of state leverage, i.e. 'corporativism', which allowed capitalism to

Italian delegation in November 1922, was to set up a united front with the rest of the working class organizations, starting with the reformist ones, that bore the main responsibility for the rise of Mussolini to power. They also had illusions in reaching a status quo between Fascism and the legal labor organizations, a conciliation between big business and the minimum program of demands of the working class. The Bordiga-led delegation, which wrongly put an equal sign between bourgeois democracy and Fascism in terms of dictatorships, met with the reply of the International in 1922. It refrained from dealing with the details of the situation, but it intervened heavily on organizational matters, a concern that showed an instinctive cry of alarm had echoed in the walls of the Fourth Congress. The recommendation by Lenin and Trotsky already reproduced also shows that the two main Bolshevik leaders were afraid of far more harmful consequences if the orientation of the Italian leadership was not changed in due time -although the main and contingent reason for their concern was that of the fusion between the young party and the Maximalist PSI (...)'As everybody knows, Trotsky's proposal was carried on. Two days after Lenin's telephone message, the Italian delegation received a letter drafted by the Central Committee of the Russian Communist Party, signed by Lenin, Trotsky, Zinoviev, Radek and Bukharin, imposing matter-of-fact the fusion with the PSI. Bordiga accepted such imposition, but he maintained his position.'

move towards more modern political and cultural forms, skipping or else telescoping the catastrophic phase.

So, two possible ways for a capitalist recovery arise: 'Americanism', in the style of Roosevelt's new deal, on one hand, and Fascism, on the other. Gramsci, by abstracting the civil war methods used by Fascism against labor, its organization and its vanguard, finds a common ground as to the aims pursued by both. These are not only to 'disperse the antagonistic forces', i.e. the proletariat, and separate it from the peasantry, but also rejuvenate capitalism on a new basis. So both Americanism and Fascism are, in Gramsci's view, attempts at 'modernizing' capitalism 'from above', and both are accounted for by the concept of passive revolution, which is above all a socio-economical category, but one that encompasses thorough-going transformations in the sphere of the state.

On top of the change in socio-economic conditions and the social customs entailed by Americanism, there also emerged a new type of state to nurture them: 'The state is of a liberal kind, not in the sense of the old customs liberalism or that meaning practical political freedom, but in a deeper sense, that of free initiative; an economic liberalism that grows into a regime of industrial concentration and monopoly altogether, as a civil society and due to its own historical development.' This new kind of state manages the economy 'endowed with key functions within the capitalist system as an enterprise (state-run holding) that concentrates the savings in its hands, putting them at the service of industry and the private sector, and also acting as a medium and long term investor.'

At the same time, this state establishes a new kind of relationship with the oppressed classes: 'Most of the depositors want to break all the bounds tying them to the private capitalist system as a whole, but they do not mistrust the state: they want to take part in the economic activity, but through the state, which guarantees them a low but secure revenue.' Hence, 'it follows that the state, in theory at least, seems to rely upon 'ordinary people' and the intellectuals, whereas its structure remains a plutocracy through and through.'

In this respect, J.C. Portantiero holds that Americanism is, for Gramsci, the most assertive stake to stave off the tendency of the rate of profit to fall within imperialist capitalism, by means of new production techniques that yield an increased relative surplus value: 'It is an expression of the crisis itself, its 'overcoming' in terms of the growth of a system that has always experienced a 'crisis-ridden' development, amid 'factors that balanced and neutralized one another'. Of course, 'Americanism' in itself has changed little 'the nature of the fundamental social groups', but it remains a capitalist backlash standing at the highest level of

the insurmountable contradictions flowing from the structure, which 'the ruling classes try and work out and overcome within given limits'...²⁰ And all this much is true, but there is more to it than that. The Americanism, for Gramsci -a socio-economic category- is inextricably linked to the political category of passive revolution, in terms of a revolution-restoration, a reformist shift within capitalism itself -and this is what the reformists or else Gramsci's bachelors gloss over all the time. The political thrust of his view is at odds with that of those who now build upon his insights, while longing for the 'welfare state' -by and large dismantled by the neoliberal onslaught in the '90s. In fact, they stand for a program of passive revolution -in the style of the old Italian 'Moderates'- aimed at restoring the latter. In stark contrast to his epigones of today, Gramsci himself warned about such attempts at rejuvenation within the state apparatus and the state-managed economic agenda, which he understood to be a medium to long-term reactionary backlash aimed at laying the basis for 'a new conformism'. It was a device designed to hamper the hegemony of the proletariat, block a communist revolution and weather the organic crisis ridding the bourgeoisie -all issues a Marxist leadership should be able to grapple with and fight against.

Americanism and the war

Let us now take a look at Trotsky's views.

In 1926, when faced with the same issue of America's emergence, he held that: 'In the article drafted by comrade Feldman, the considerations on the path of development of the United States have taken on a rather algorithmic shape. He reached the conclusion that the development of America was reliant, at best, on a blind alley, and that its present-day rise amounts to nothing when compared to that of past decades. If this should be true, we are not allowed to build a perspective leading to a peaceful world development. The rise of the United States to the top, insofar as it proceeds smoothly, will lead Europe to a blind alley from the economic standpoint, and Europe will either decline as the Roman Empire did, or else will go through a revolutionary revival. But right now, we cannot talk about a European decline. If the development of the United States should be halted, the powerful forces at work within it will seek a way out through war. That will be its only chance of overcoming the shortcomings flowing from the circumstances underpinning its economic development. Such shortcomings move along like the vortex of a hurricane. Such vortex, full of a colossal force and delayed, might wreak havoc within the country.'

'Let us examine now the position of the proletariat. With regards to Britain, nothing is left of the old aristocratic position of the

20. Juan Carlos Portantiero, *Uses of Gramsci*. The emphasis in the quotation is verbatim from Gramsci

British proletariat. Our fraternal deal with the British unions [the Anglo-Russian Committee] relies on the economic decline of Britain. Now, it is the working class in the United States the one that has conquered a privileged position. A delay in the economic development of the United States would provoke a huge shift in the balance of forces at home, thus spurting into life a revolutionary movement that would emerge with that typical American speed. In this way, the two likely scenarios in the United States lead us to envisage massive cataclysms in the decades ahead, rather than peaceful developments. Quite recently, an American edition of *The Economist* carried an article stating that, as the experience of the latest war showed, the United States needs an all-out war. The American imperialists have made their choice, but that is not one of a peaceful development.²¹

We should note that those definitions were devised before the 1929 crash in the US that brought about a turning point in the world arena. Even before it, Trotsky was able to envisage the deep tendencies and the inter-imperialist contradictions at work that should nourish new revolutionary developments, on one hand, and war, on the other. Some years later, in the aftermath of the Wall Street crash, he furnishes -taking issue with the program adopted by the Comintern- a dialectical train of thought as the American crisis was unfolding in September 1930: 'Molotov meant to say, 'Trotsky extolled the prowess of America and look now, the United States is going through a deep slump. But shall we conclude that the capitalist prowess is devoid of crisis? Did Britain, in the climax of worldwide rule, not know of crises? Can we think of a crisis-free development of capitalism at all? This is what we have said in this regard in the draft program of the Comintern:

'We shall not dwell here in pondering the key issue of the duration of the American crisis and its likely scope. It is a conjuncture problem, not a programmatic one. It goes without a saying that we hold no doubts with regards to the inevitability of a crisis, neither do we rule out that, given the world scope of American capitalism, the next crisis could be extremely deep and sharp. But there is absolutely nothing leading us to believe that that should hamper or weaken the hegemony of American in any possible way. Such conclusion would nourish gross strategic blunders. It is just contrariwise. In a period of crisis, the United States will exert its hegemony to the full in the most brazen and brutal manner, even more so than in the period of its climax. The United States will try and overcome its problems and woes at the expense of Europe in the main.'²²

From now onwards, we can notice a

shift in Trotsky's insights in the 1930s with respect to those of the 1920s. This change was due to the 1929 crash, which disrupted the 'unstable equilibrium' of capitalism, as the Comintern had put it, and ushered in a new period. A new 'catastrophic phase' was in the making, and new revolutionary opportunities would arise in its trail. This will indeed happen with the opening salvos of the Spanish revolution in 1931, and also the revolution in France unleashed with the factory occupations of 1936. Both revolutions, Trotsky would point out later, offered the chance of 'stopping the imperialist war through revolutions from below'. But these ended up in defeat, not because of any sort of inescapable fate, but rather as a result of the CPs' policy of 'Popular Fronts'. In 1935, the VII Congress of the Stalin-led Comintern adopted that tactic, which turned the CPs in willing aides of a moribund capitalism.

Now then, even in the period of a catastrophic crisis, Trotsky did not fail to appraise the potential of American capitalism, only to emphasize that such superiority would not prevail over Europe along peaceful lines. In 1933, he held that, in spite of an American superiority reliant on the law of labor productivity, and his technical superiority incarnated in Fordism, '...the old planet Earth is reluctant to be turned over. Everyone is protecting from the rest by building a wall of goods and weapons. Europe does not purchase goods, does not pay its debts and arms itself besides. A greedy Japan has seized a whole country just with five squalid divisions. The most advanced technique in the world, suddenly, seems helpless before the obstacles flowing from an utterly inferior technique. The law of the productivity of labor seems to be going down. But it just seems to doing so. The basic law running through the whole history of mankind is inevitably poised to take revenge on those secondary and accidental phenomena. Sooner or later, American capitalism will open its way all throughout our planet. What methods will it resort to? All of them. A high rate of productivity denotes a high rate of destructive forces. Am I preaching war? I am not preaching anything. I am just trying to analyze the laws presiding over the dynamics of the economy.'²³

Trotsky understands better than Gramsci the drift of this epoch of crisis, wars and revolutions: Americanism would only prevail at the expense of Europe, plunging the world in a new war in the process. Even when we take into account Gramsci's contributions to Marxist political science vis-à-vis the question of the modern state, we see that Trotsky grappled best with one the main characteristics of those 'advanced' states in the imperialist epoch. As Lenin had remarked, not only were they an organ of force and repression at home (to which Gramsci added those aspects of consensus), but a tool

of war abroad as well -a state 'for looting'.²⁴ That was his structural analysis, a continuation of the Comintern's, although that tendency underwent two different phases -that of the unstable equilibrium in the 1920s and its disruption in the 1930s.

Meanwhile, in Gramsci's view, the likelihood of a whole cycle of passive revolutions was predicated upon 'the cessation of the fundamental organic struggle and the overcoming of the catastrophic phase'²⁵, within the limits imposed by the imperialist epoch. It is true that Gramsci pointed out that the 'passive revolutions' were a 'revolution-restoration, in which the second moment alone prevails'. And he also added, 'the restorations, whatever the name attached to them, the ones of today above all [Gramsci's own emphasis] are universally repressive'. But the key aspect of a passive revolution is that it pursues 'the reduction of the dialectics to a mere evolutionary, reformist process'.

Trotsky, instead, approaches the period from the standpoint that capitalism leads to renewed catastrophes. 'The life of monopoly capitalism in our times is a chain of crises. Every single crisis brings about a catastrophe. The need to escape from such token catastrophes by means of tariff walls, inflation, the rise of government expenditure, the hike of debt levels; all these lay the basis for further crises, deeper and more widespread. The struggle to access more markets, raw materials and colonies makes a military catastrophe inevitable. And these in turn nourish revolutionary catastrophes. It is indeed hard to agree to Mr. Sombart's statement that present-day capitalism becomes every day more and more 'tranquil, reasonable and peaceful'. It would be more correct to say that it is losing the last vestiges of reason. At any rate, there is no doubt that the 'theory of collapse' has triumphed over the theory of a peaceful development.'²⁶

Of course, Trotsky's concept of a 'catastrophic phase' does not apply to the economic sphere alone. His 'theory of collapse' is understood not just in terms of a merely economic cataclysm, but also rather as a linking of catastrophes in the economic, military and revolutionary realms -i.e. the articulation of a crisis, the policies of the states (hegemony) and the class struggle. These very three factors that -according to Trotsky- had accounted for the previous 'unstable equilibrium', were now breaking it down. Once again, we see the same criteria at work, both in the 1920s and the 1930s, although the nature of the situation has radically changed.

What about Gramsci? In the words of one his followers: 'In conclusion, two elements emerge very clearly: a) By the end of the century that Eric Hobsbawm branded 'the age of extremes', we must emphasize the

21. Leon Trotsky, *On the Question of the Tendencies in the Development of the World Economy*, January 1926.

22. Leon Trotsky, *The Third International after Lenin*

23. Leon Trotsky, *Nationalism and the Economy*, November 1933

24. Lenin, *The State and the Revolution*

25. *Notebooks from Prison (QC III)*

26. Leon Trotsky, *Marxism and our Epoch*, February 1939

importance of the fact that Gramsci stayed away from the radicalization and the simplification cutting across the intellectual dualities of the 1930s (and beyond) along the lines of the pairs Communism-Fascism or Fascism-antifascism; b) he anticipated a picture of the future of capitalism that was to unfold in the post World War II period with the new American hegemony. He failed to foresee the tragic ethos of Nazism, the Second World War, Auschwitz or the aberration of Stalinism; quite paradoxically, from inside the walls of the Turi prison he sees those 'structural' features of our century without blinding himself, as so many other commentators.²⁷

In that convulsive interregnum of the crisis of world hegemony, Gramsci did not reach the stature of Trotsky's strategic prognoses, who clearly anticipated that the way out for the crisis of hegemony would come hand in hand with a new world war, and also the outcome of the class struggle unleashed by that war as a 'midwife of revolution'. He developed, basing himself on such strategic prognosis, both the program and an embryonic international organization. He built upon a comprehensive theory, as well as the lessons drawn from the main tests of the class struggle, contrasting them with the international policy of the Stalin-led Comintern. Building upon those lessons, such as the experience of the Anglo-Russian Committee; the fate of the Chinese revolution; the turning point of the capitulation of the German CP before Hitler; the program and the tactics for the Spanish Revolution; the reckless denunciation of those who betrayed it and the strict demarcation from the capitulators; its rejection of the 'Popular Front' policy and the characterization of the Stalinist phenomenon and the degeneration of the USSR; he will proceed to build the International Left Opposition, and later on he will found the Fourth International. His bet was that the latter would play a leading role in the future developments.

Understanding the aftermath of WWII

Now then, we believe that if we take out the out-of-time gradualist views as to a rejuvenation of capitalism enshrined in Gramsci's thought, the concept of 'passive revolution' proves to be very fruitful to deal with the aftermath of World War II. We brand them 'out-of-time gradualist views' because it was the war alone that paved the way for the United States to impose its hegemony over the world and spread Fordism to Europe all along the way. It came to prevail after massive destruction of productive forces in Europe; after the main contenders of the United States -Germany and Japan- were defeated and out of the game; and after a contradictory outcome of the class struggle

in the wake of the mass upsurge that followed the war. Ultimately, Gramsci failed to see that, starting from his own definitions, the United States would only impose its hegemony over the world after a tour de force that should then usher in a new 'consensus'. We should, however, bear in mind that American imperialism resorted to an invaluable aid to get away with this: Stalinism. The latter hindered the upswing sweeping through Europe, laying the foundations for the stabilization of the main capitalist countries.²⁸

Only when this worldwide catastrophic phase was left behind, with the advent of the agreements at Yalta and Potsdam between the victorious imperialism and a rejuvenated Soviet bureaucracy, only then is when the concept of passive revolution comes in to chart best the evolution of the new world scenario.

We believe that at least two key elements of that passive revolution hold out. First the advent of a 'Keynesian' economics in the capitalist countries, i.e., the new deal transformed now in *raison d'état*, whose essential features vis-à-vis the masses and the state relationships with the economy were foreseen by Gramsci. Second, the controversial 1943-48 revolutions in Eastern Europe engineered by the Red Army in those occupied territories such as Poland, Hungary, Czechoslovakia and even half of Germany, which could also be branded proletarian passive revolutions.²⁹

28. 'The 'normal' exertion of hegemony' is characterized by a combination of force and consensus, to a variable degree, without force prevailing over consensus'. But in some given situations, where the use of force was too risky, 'the corruption-fraud comes in between force and consensus, i.e., the weakening and paralyzing of the antagonist or antagonists' (Gramsci, Notebooks from Prison) On this question, in a recent editorial appeared in *New Left Review*, Perry Anderson confirms what we have been writing on this key factor to understand the widespread influence of American hegemony in the post-war period: '...the consensus enhanced in this way was of a special kind. The elites in Russia and in China -were they begun earlier- were certainly susceptible to the magnetism irradiated by America's cultural and material success, in which they saw patterns to imitate. In this respect, the internalization by the subjugated powers of those selected values and attributes of the supreme state, which Gramsci would have considered essential to any international hegemony, began to break new grounds. But the objective nature of those regimes was still a far cry from the American prototype for such subjective disposition, so as to become a trustworthy partner for every act of complacency in the Security Council. For this, a third weapon had to come into play, one that Gramsci considered to be in-between force and consensus, but closer to the latter, i.e., corruption.' *New Left Review* N° 17, September-October 2002.

29. Of course, we do not include the Chinese or the Yugoslavian revolutions in this category of proletarian passive revolutions. Both were led by guerrilla armies and local Stalinist parties

Gramsci highlighted that at the time of the Risorgimento, 'the barricades in the style of Paris 1848 were nowhere to be seen in Italy' because they were replaced by the draft to the standing army of Piedmont. Likewise, that was the role played by Stalinism in the era of proletarian revolution, i.e., stifle the emergence of 1917-styled soviets and replace them with the advance of the Red Army in the East. Stalin's own role in the Yalta-Potsdam accords, which codified the control of Eastern Europe by the USSR, can be also explained in terms of the 'diplomatisation of the revolution' -in line with Gramsci's account of the Italian national unification. Likewise, the use by Stalinism of most of the old pre-war bourgeois state personnel in the newly created deformed workers states partially partakes a 'restoration'. The capitalist relationships of production were changed there into planned economies, but this progressive task went hand in hand with a reactionary hampering of the soviets as organs for the self-government of the masses. The new role of the Communist Parties and the unions led by the Stalinists and Social democrats amounted to a big scale 'transformism', in which they used all their ascendancy to rebuild Europe along capitalist lines. Last but not least, the features of the 'welfare state' foreseen by Gramsci as a new type of capitalist state prevailed, and became the norm in the imperialist heartlands -and even in some semi-colonies.

We believe that in its general features, the new and contradictory post-war developments can be understood as part and parcel of a great passive revolution, which should be regarded also as a response to the mass and working class upsurge, handing over 'reformist concessions to neutralize the subjugated classes' in that most exceptional period ranging from 1943 to 1949.

A third attempt at a passive revolution was to engineer a 'de-colonization' from above, devised by the imperialists to hold down the anti-colonial revolution. They changed the status of their old colonies, recognizing them as 'modern' semi-colonial nations, but that move proved fruitless. It was precisely there, in the periphery of the capitalist world where the revolution

at odds with Moscow, which also stifled the emergence of soviets of workers and peasants, and congealed the revolution within national boundaries, hence they gave birth to deformed workers' states. Nevertheless, the masses and its vanguard elements played an active role, joining the 'party-armies' of Tito and Mao. For a deeper reflection on this topic, see *Estrategia Internacional* N° 3, February 1993, on what we called an 'exceptional period' between the years 1943-49. In those years, we believe, the marginal hypothesis contained in the Transitional Program came to prevail due to an extraordinary situation. It stated that, in theory, the likelihood existed that the reformist parties 'in some given circumstances -a crash, war, mass revolutionary pressure (...) go farther than they wish down the road of breaking away with the bourgeoisie.'

27. Mario Teló, 'Gramsci and the Future of the Western World', in *Gramscian Studies Today*

erupted with all its force, in a true outburst of the oppressed peoples living in the colonies and the semi-colonies. And it is to the credit of the Fourth International and its prognoses the fact that they urged the proletariat and the masses in the semi-colonial countries not to wait for the revolution in the imperialist metropolises, but start their own revolution right away. In this way, they might be able to achieve the dictatorship of the proletariat before their metropolitan counterparts. This development also proved the theory of permanent revolution was right to emphasize the key role that the backward countries were poised to play in the process.

Despite of the fact that major concessions were handed over to the working class in the advanced countries, the upsurge of the colonial revolution in the postwar (and the inability to steer a passive revolution to stop them) confirmed that the epoch was an imperialist one, just as Trotsky had emphasized. 'The imperialist classes were in a position to hand over some concessions to the colonial peoples and their own workers when capitalism was on the upswing, and the exploiters felt they could firmly rely on a steady rise of the profits. But today, we cannot even dream of that. World imperialism is in decline. The position of the imperialist nations becomes more difficult every day, whereas the contradictions between them get worse all the time. The monstrous arms race under way devours an ever-increasing share of the national income. The imperialists can no longer deliver any significant concession to the toiling masses at home, nor can they give them to the colonies. Quite on the contrary, they are forced to resort to an ever-worsening exploitation. It is precisely this that speaks of the agony of capitalism.'³⁰

Although, as we said above, concessions were given to the working class in the advanced countries as a byproduct of their revolutionary action, which forced the elite to 'give away something so as not to lose everything', the dictum of the Fourth International was proved right all along the way in those countries in the grip of imperialism.

30. This quotation is included in the Manifesto entitled 'India before the Imperialist War', July 1939. In it, there are also the following statements, common to many public statements issued by the Fourth International at the time: '...the war might mean, both in India and also the rest of the colonies, not a reinforced enslavement but total freedom; the premises for achieving it is a correct revolutionary policy. The Indian people must part ways, right from now, with British Imperialism. The oppressors and the oppressed stand in different sides of the trenches. No collaboration with the enslavers at all! Contrariwise, we have to use the enormous difficulties that the outbreak of the war will create to deal a heavy blow to the ruling classes. That is how the oppressed classes and peoples should act in all the countries, without regardless of whether their imperialist masters conceal their faces behind democratic or Fascist masks.'

The massive outburst of the masses in the semi-colonies confirmed the validity of the strategic perspective charted by Trotsky. Those movements will remain active beyond the exceptional period of 1943-49, for all the duration of the Yalta Order, a period during which they will remain the most revolutionary factor of the class struggle worldwide. As we pointed out above, the strengthening of the Stalinist apparatus worldwide will prevent them from impinging upon the imperialist heartlands and boosting a revolution there. The latter will even resort to all the means available to congeal all the 'national liberation' developments in the colonies, keeping them in the realm of the bourgeois regime.

That was the case to an unforeseen development, one that Trotsky's -let alone Gramsci's- prognoses failed to anticipate, i.e., the most extraordinary political feature of the postwar superstructure -the new role of Stalinism as a bulwark against the revolution on a planetary scale.

Trotsky betted that the world revolutionary developments unleashed by the war -which took place widely in the period 1943-49- would provoke, in turn, the overthrow of the Soviet bureaucracy, paving the way for the revolutionary rejuvenation of the USSR. But this perspective did not materialize. Far from it, the outcome of the war was a new lease of life for the bureaucratic caste, not only in the USSR but also in a new system of deformed workers states that sprung up in Eastern Europe. The working class and the masses managed to regain forces after the massacres of the imperialist war, as much as they had done after 1914-1918. Then, they went on to stage a colossal upsurge, of major relevance since it swept across key capitalist countries, such as Italy, France, and Greece, at the time of the armed resistance against Nazism. Stalinism nonetheless managed to weather that upsurge, and earned itself a renewed prestige in the eyes of the masses for having defeated the German Army at Stalingrad. Besides, it was able to derail such developments, holding back the working class and putting all its organizations at the service of a capitalist rebuilding of Europe -along the lines of 'Americanism'.

But, regardless of the fact that Trotsky's political prognoses were proved wrong, he stood well above Gramsci, since he laid the basis for understanding Stalinism and the degeneration of the Russian revolution altogether³¹, and also waged a stubborn battle against it before the war, giving precious guidelines on how to fight against it as well. He was the only Marxist that raised a program for a new kind of revolution, the 'political revolution', that should be carried through in the degenerate workers' state. He also set forth a whole system of specific transitional demands aimed at overthrow-

31. Apart from dozens of essays and articles, we should include here works like *The Betrayed Revolution and In Defense of Marxism*.

ing the parasitic caste in charge there, while preserving the conquests of the nationalized economy, restoring the actual power of the soviets and re-launching the transition to socialism by endowing the workers state with a revolutionary policy, both at home and abroad.

Secondly, although he was not in a position to predict the increased class collaboration practiced by the Soviet bureaucracy with imperialism on a world scale -as it was codified in the Yalta Accords-, he nevertheless anticipated, in the fight waged against the 'popular fronts' in the 1930s in France and Spain, that Stalinism had become an 'additional stumbling block' in the path leading the proletariat to class independence. Gramsci, in turn, who used the term 'transformism' abundantly in his analysis of a bourgeois revolution, failed to see the biggest process of transformism ever in the realm of proletarian revolution, i.e., the advent of the Soviet bureaucracy.

The permanent revolution blocked

'The economic prerequisite for proletarian revolution has by and large reached its peak under capitalism. The productive forces of mankind have stagnated... The objective conditions for revolution have not only ripened, but they are starting to rot. If there is no socialist revolution in the period ahead of us, humanity is threatened with undergoing a catastrophe. The time has come for the proletariat to come to the fore, led by its revolutionary vanguard. The historical crisis of mankind boils down to that of its revolutionary leadership.'³²

This correct statement, in historical terms, that opens the Transitional Program adopted by the Fourth International in 1938, was partially disavowed in the wake of 1948, with its notorious consequences. We believe that a whole series of objective and subjective conditions resulted in a blockade of the dynamics of permanent revolution. The task was then to enhance the concept of 'crisis of revolutionary leadership' -some Trotskyist currents have made a fetish out of it. Posing the question in a concrete fashion, we can say that the crisis of revolutionary leadership, especially the paths to overcome it, were not exactly the same ones in the 1930s, at a time when revolution and counter-revolution clashed openly, than in the postwar period. The outcome of the war and the ensuing upswing brought about new material conquests for the proletariat that became institutionalized, ranging from reformist concessions in the advanced capitalist countries up to the creation of new states where capital had been expropriated, although this resulted in a strengthening of a counter-revolutionary leadership. This meant that the followers of the Fourth In-

32. *The Transitional Program of the Fourth International, 1938*

ternational had to ponder this issue in the light of 'the world of Yalta', and reinstate a new strategic framework, and also adjust their program accordingly.

a) The extent of the partial development of the productive forces had to be pondered right away. In this field, Trotskyism split in two tendencies, both of which were wrong. On one side stood those who, like the International Committee sponsored by Pierre Lambert (including the Argentina-based group led by Nahuel Moreno and the Bolivian POR of Guillermo Lora³³), held on to a 'stagnation view'. 'The productive forces of mankind have stagnated', they claimed, ruminating the words of the Transitional Program over and over again. They thus remained oblivious to the fact that the colossal destruction of productive forces wreaked by the war, and the ensuing capitalist rebuilding of Europe allowed for the implementation of the most advanced American techniques, in a sudden and concentrated fashion, and therefore created a quick demand of consumer goods, all at one and the same time. This was a token countertendency, a limited and temporary one, but one that reversed what was a fact before the war. The continued existence of the imperialist epoch, i.e., the phase of capitalist decline, was in no way tantamount to the stagnation of the productive forces, which underwent a partial development during the period 1948-68. Those who opposed this 'stagnation view' were the followers of Ernest Mandel's United Secretariat. They held the view that that partial development during the boom had brought to life a 'neocapitalism' or else a 'late capitalism', thus adopting an adapted version of the bourgeois view on capitalist crises. These could be traced in the so-called 'waves' or automatic cycles of growth and slump, the class struggle being a totally subordinated factor in them.

b) That partial development of the productive forces in the advanced countries, along with the Keynesian 'welfare state' that was instrumental in the bargaining between capital and labor, laid the basis for a rebirth of reformism, this time relying on a more widespread and enhanced layer of the labor aristocracy in the imperialist countries. Back in the 1930s, the European social democracy had been caught in the crossfire of Fascism, which thwarted its parliamentary game, on one hand, and the proletarian grassroots on the other, which carried into its ranks the radicalized atmosphere prevailing in various countries.³⁴ The postwar period and the

regained capitalist stability found it at the head of mass unions that profited from the new conquests handed over by the 'welfare state'. Stalinism, in turn, would rely on the widest mass support ever, thus tightening its grip on the working class movement, not only in the capitalist countries, but in the new deformed workers' states in Eastern Europe as well. The capitalist boom enabled these to gain some economic autarchy. On top of this, the nationalization of the economy in a series of countries boosted, in itself, the thrust towards the industrial development of hitherto overwhelmingly peasant nations, raising the standard of living of the masses significantly as well. As a whole, a new working class movement is brought to life, with new economic conquests, themselves the by-product of the outcome of the war, which will lay the basis for a new mass reformism, a 'renewed conformism' as Gramsci would have put it. Both Stalinism and social democracy thus came out of the war strengthened.

c) Stalinism became the 'official Marxism', thus opening up an abysmal gap in the continuity of revolutionary Marxism. Through the creation of different tendencies and various internecine fights, continuity had been maintained, through the first three Internationals and up to the Fourth International -from Marx and Engels' Communist Manifesto in 1848, right up to the Manifesto against the War drafted by Trotsky in 1940. Although Trotsky had warned that Stalinism was already 'an additional stumbling block' for the proletariat, he never could have imagined the extent it would reach in the wake of the war. The Trotskyists should have pondered the dangers this entailed. The own ranks of the Fourth International had to be looked at from the perspective anticipated by Trotsky before the war: should the proletariat fail to deliver a revolutionary response (and it had indeed failed to do so, or had only done it partially), the workers' parties, even the most revolutionary ones amongst them, ran the risk of degenerating. 'All those skeptical people of the superficial type are delighted to point their fingers at the degeneration of Bolshevik centralism into stifling bureaucratism. As if the whole course of history was hinged upon the structure of a given party! In fact, it is the fate of the party that is hinged upon the course of the class struggle. At any rate, the Bolshevik Party was the only one that displayed, in action, the ability to accomplish a proletarian revolution. It is precisely such a party what the international proletariat badly needs right now. If the bourgeois regime survives the war, all the revolutionary parties will de-

generate. If the proletarian revolution ends up victorious and seizes power, all those conditions nourishing degeneration will fade away.³⁵ Against this alternative prognosis, there were many countries, China, the Eastern half of Germany, etc, were the bourgeois regime went down after the war, but it 'got away with it' in the main centers of capitalist-imperialist power. This was a most paradoxical outcome that found Stalinism at the head of a process of widespread 'transformism'. The CPs became the agents of passive revolutions that enabled them to hold on to power and safeguard the new status quo reached with American imperialism. In those circumstances, subjectively adverse ones indeed, the forces of the Fourth International were, as a whole, cast aside and survived as isolated propaganda groups.

d) The dynamics of the permanent revolution is blocked. The mutual relationships between the metropolises, the semi-colonies and the Soviet Union of the pre-war era, which were dealt with in the Theory of Permanent Revolution, and also The Transitional Program inherited from the times of Trotsky, were a most valuable algebra of Marxism, but one that should be made operational by giving it new concrete values in order to guide the revolutionary action. Now, the 'weak links in the chain' of the international state system shaped by the Order of Yalta were to be found, by and large, in the colonies and semi-colonies. Their former imperial masters, such as France and Britain in Asia and Africa, had been weakened in the face of the new American domination of the world. Capitalism was thus reinforced in the advanced capitalist countries, and revolution was displaced to the periphery of semi-colonial countries.

In turn, the Moscow bureaucracy used its prestige and the material resources of its new states, above all, with the aim of derailing, congealing, blackmailing and corrupting the mass uprisings in the colonies, co-opting the leaderships of the 'national liberation' movements. Each time the colonial masses achieved political independence as a nation, that victory was not used as a platform to advance towards a workers' state, but it was used as a brake on the revolution, keeping it within the limits of bourgeois democracy. And when a revolution went beyond this straightjacket, such as Cuba, Stalinism would sooner or later use the conquest of a new state where capital had been expropriated as a pawn to wrestle a pact from imperialism. Far from spreading the revolution to the international arena, it was frozen within national boundaries.³⁶

33. Jorge Altamira, leader of the Argentine Partido Obrero, belongs to this strand of thought.

Although they never built any international organization, he used to have links with Lambert and Lora, and clings to a catastrophist pseudo-economic theory, which has resulted in very interesting insights indeed

34. Such combination of elements in the 1930s led the French Socialdemocracy further to the left, beyond what its reformist leaders wished, being momentarily thrown into disarray. Trotsky

then suggested to the small revolutionary nuclei to enter the Socialist Party, a tactic that came to be known as 'the French turn'. The purpose was to recruit its more radicalized members from the inside, and address, from within that mass party, to the Communist workers inside the Stalinized CPs.

35. This postulate is developed by Trotsky in the 'Manifesto of the Fourth International on the Imperialist War and the World Proletarian Revolution', May 1940.

36. The Trotskyist leader, Nahuel Moreno, the founder of the current we come from, tried to deal with this contradictory situation by asserting that 'reality has become even more Trotskyist than Trotsky himself'. He meant to say

The revolutionary forces needed to make a reinstatement and an update of the links between the metropolises and the semi-colonies, incorporating the recently created deformed workers' states to the characterization of the whole picture of the world state system (hegemony). Such appraisal was needed, to prevent the Trotskyist currents that played an outstanding role in some revolutionary developments in the semi-colonies, such as Algeria, Ceylon, Vietnam, Bolivia or Argentina, did not fall into a 'third world orientation'. This is what some sections of the Trotskyist International did, whereas other sections adapted themselves to the conditions imposed by the Social-democratic and Stalinist apparatuses, or else both at the same time. The task was to link up the political work in the semi-colonial countries with that in the advanced countries, building factions for a concrete proletarian internationalism among the unions and the mass parties in the imperialist heartlands.

e) A new definition of a Marxist strategy should have emphasized the program of political revolution for both the deformed workers' states and the USSR, as a key lever to intervene in the other 'weak links' of world hegemony. The 1953 strike in Eastern Germany, the 1956 Hungarian revolution and the 1968 Czech uprising when the boom went down, all of them bore testimony to this. The 'world order' broke down in those workers' states that had originated in passive revolutions, engineered from above after the occupation of the Red Army. It was there that the first symptoms of discontent against the Great Russian oppression

that the permanent dynamics of the revolution was manifest in the fact that even Stalinist parties, or guerrilla movements, had been forced to seize power and expropriate the bourgeoisie in a whole number of countries due to the pressure of objective factors themselves. The revolution had thus become 'objectively socialist'. We already took issue with this statement in *Estrategia Internacional* N°3. In it, we said that Moreno extended the exceptional period of 1943-49 to the whole postwar period, transforming it into a norm. In this way, not only did he distort the fundamentals of the theory of permanent revolution, but worse still, reality itself as well. This new view broke the links between the tasks to be accomplished by the revolution, on one hand, and the subjects -the class and the party- that should carry them to their conclusion. These are just aspects of the theory of permanent revolution, which cannot be considered in isolation from one another. If that was not the case, what good was the International Left Opposition's rejection of Stalin's forceful drive to a collective agriculture? The 'socialist task' of abolishing ownership in the countryside cannot be taken in isolation from the methods of the proletarian revolution; neither can they be regarded as separate from the class that should accomplish such task. Trotsky replied to those kinds of arguments in his time: 'it is not only 'what' that matters, it also counts the 'how' and 'who' does it: whether it is the bureaucracy or the soviets.' This must have been the reasoning of postwar Trotskyists.

emerged, which were later to burst out in 1989-91 in a generalized fashion as 'national conflicts'. That labyrinthine shape of the class struggle that swept through the nationalities of the former USSR and Yugoslavia, led by nationalist and anti-proletarian leaderships. With regards to this, the majority of the strands of Trotskyism abandoned the programmatic guidelines bequeathed by Trotsky -the 1930s slogan for 'an Independent Soviet Ukraine' aimed against the Great Russian oppression as well as Hitler's imperialist ambitions-, after decades of having considered that Stalinism had furnished a solution for 'national question' in the workers' states.

Little or nothing did the 'really existing Trotskyism' to grapple with the issues being examined here. We have branded it 'the Trotskyism of Yalta' to characterize the degeneration of the Fourth International in the postwar period. That brand of Trotskyism consistently failed to re-elaborate a new strategic perspective, and thus ended up capitulating to the milieu of imperialism and the soviet bureaucracy. In this article, we highlight some elements we had already pinpointed in previous works, with a view to opening a discussion that should result in more accurate definitions, analyzing the convulsive last century, and also drawing lessons for the future. We have taken on board Gramsci's concepts of 'passive revolution' and 'transformism' (although we have appraised them in the light of Trotsky's insights vis-à-vis World War II and Stalinism), and applied them to enhance our postulates on the mechanisms used for blocking the revolution in the postwar period. We believe that those who just ruminated the old truism, 'the crisis of mankind boils down to the crisis of revolutionary leadership' during the reign of Yalta, so that no 'orthodox' Trotskyist would dare disagree, were the very same 'orthodox' Trotskyists that regarded the emergence of Marshal 'Tito', Fidel Castro or else guerrilla and nationalist bourgeois movements as a very 'practical' solution to that crisis. They alternatively called them 'revolutionary leaderships', or if need be, encouraged support for them in terms of supporting 'the lesser evil'.

We are not going to scrutinize here the whole record of capitulation of postwar Trotskyism.³⁷ And we do not do so because we consider that their wrongdoing were justified in any way by the objective conditions. On the other hand, we do not adhere to a subjectivist and voluntaristic view, as it clearly follows from this work, one stating that the fragmented and weakened forces of the Fourth International after Trotsky would have been able to substantially change the

37. Let us point out that the current led by Nahuel Moreno in Argentina, from which we come from, went from outright dissolution within the Peronist movement back in the 1950s to extol the Cuban leadership around Fidel Castro in the 1960s

world map during the Order of Yalta. But we also reject any sort of fatalistic view of the chances for revolutionary Marxists, even in the darkest years, when both imperialism and Stalinism reigned supreme. Let us take the 1952 Bolivian revolution as an example. There, the POR led by Guillermo Lora caved in to a bourgeois nationalist movement -the MNR, by sowing illusions in its left wing, and this historical chance for Trotskyism was squandered. Of course, there were tight limits weighing upon a revolution in a small semi-colonial country dominated by the aforementioned objective conditions. But it would have been nevertheless a subjective boost for the Fourth International, since the latter would have earned a clear prestige in the eyes of vanguard workers around the world. At that time, both Maoism and Titoism held a tight grip on it, because they had led victorious revolutions, and it was also the heyday for bourgeois or petty bourgeois nationalism, which was heading the movement for 'national liberation'.

When the first cracks appeared in the facade of the Order of Yalta in 1968, the year that saw the onset of a world upsurge and a capitalist crisis that drags up to the present, most of the various tendencies claiming allegiance to the Fourth International kept doing business as usual in the shadow of non-revolutionary leaderships.

Perry Anderson pointed out: 'We have to say that in spite of their political tact and their emphasis on the strategy (...) the alternative tradition of revolutionary Marxism (...) did not prove to be more fruitful than its historical rivals. When I wrote 'Considerations on Western Marxism', the Marxist line coming from Trotsky seemed quite willing, after decades of a marginal existence, to reintroduce a mass post-Stalinist left politics in the advanced capitalist countries. Always much closer to the issues surrounding a socialist practice, both politically and economically, than the philosophical line of Western Marxism, the remarkable theoretical heritage of the Trotskyist tradition gave it an advantageous point of departure in the new conjuncture marked by a popular upsurge and a world depression in the early 1970s (...) History put this movement to a decisive test in those years, but it failed. The downfall of Fascism in Portugal nourished the most favorable conditions for a socialist revolution in an European country ever since the capitulation of the Winter Palace (...) The Fourth International lost its way at the crossroads of the Portuguese revolution...'³⁸

The 1974-75 Portuguese revolution was a 'classical' one, combining anti-colonial uprisings in Angola and Mozambique under the impact of the Vietnamese struggle, with a popular and working class upsurge against the dictatorship of Salazar at home, in a weak link of the chain of imperialist countries. Was it then, as Anderson points

38. Perry Anderson, In the Tracks of Historical Materialism

out, the last great chance that Trotskyism had to rejuvenate its strategic foundations? Did history not furnish a second great chance in the 1980s, in what was the last great 'rehearsal of political revolution', namely Poland 1980? That development might have also boosted the forces of the Fourth International as well, in anticipation of the 1989-91 upswing in Eastern Europe, the USSR and China. Whatever it was, the whole record of Trotskyism in previous years -which only had weak links of continuity with the foundational postulates of the Fourth International- led it to squander the chances offered by the 1968-80 upsurge, in which both Stalinism and social democracy last acted as a major bulwark against proletarian revolution. The ensuing capitalist backlash came with a high price attached to it: the Reagan-Thatcher onslaught of the 1980s and 1990s, with all its consequences -a massive loss of all kinds of conquests for the working class worldwide, in which we should obviously include the capitalist restoration in the degenerate and deformed workers' states.

Some people regard those events as a 'historical defeat' that put the working class in retreat indefinitely. We do not agree with that view. We think the new international perspective will offer new revolutionary opportunities.

Rosa Luxemburg once said that the fight of the proletariat for its emancipation was a winding road full of defeats, but one that would eventually lead to victory nonetheless. During the years of the Yalta Order, such dictum appeared to have been put upside-down: victorious revolutions and new working class conquests that strengthened the position of reformist leaderships that would lead them to defeat later on -such as the defeat inflicted to the working class worldwide by the neoliberal offensive, with the loss of conquests that those leaderships claimed to defend.

We claim that the turn-about in the situation has fuelled a most contradictory outcome.

The massive loss of conquests and the atomization of the proletariat that the imperialist offensive in the 1990s brought about in its trail is fuelling a crisis of labor subjectivity, in which the latter has to start from a very low level in order to win the unity of its ranks again. But in this phase of decline of the US hegemony (that we charted in this issue of *Estrategia Internacional*), the demise of world Stalinism will offer new chances for overcoming the crisis in favor of the mass movement. This is now potentially free from the straitjacket that held them down for decades, preventing the emergence and growth of soviet-type organs. It is precisely in the appraisal of the strategic relevance of such organs of mass direct democracy that Trotsky and Gramsci agree to the utmost -this mutual agreement between one another is even stronger than each of them

separately considered in relation with their respective 'followers'. But if Trotsky's thought keeps weak threads of continuity with the present, Gramsci's legacy has undergone a direr fate. The break of today's epigones of Gramsci, genuine Moderates of today, all of them promoters of passive revolutions, with Gramsci the revolutionary thinker is clearly more abysmal than that separating Trotsky and his epigones.

As a way of conclusion, we can say that, when it comes to continuity with the 'rampant Marxism' of the revolutionary Comintern, the superiority of Trotskyism, even with all its degenerate strands, is the result of a historical achievement: the foundation of the Fourth International in 1938. Its re-foundation is a pending task that entails understanding the lessons that we can draw from its degeneration. We wrote this article as a contribution to that task, in this new phase of the class struggle, trying to respond to the challenges ahead.

Quelle: <http://www.ft.org.ar/estrategia/ei19/ei19inglestroygramsci.htm>

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Permanent Revolution and the War of Position: The theory of revolution in Gramsci and Trotsky

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It is a well known fact that, in November 1917, as soon as Lenin and the majority of the party had switched to Trotsky's conception, and sought to remove, not only the political administration, but also the industrial government, Zinoviev and Kamenev stuck to the party's traditional stance; they wanted a revolutionary coalition government with the Mensheviks and SRites, and that was the reason why they walked out of the Central Committee, issuing statements and articles in non-Bolshevik newspapers, and they stopped short of breaking away altogether'. If we should take this statement by Gramsci -or other similar ones¹- on the debate opened up in the Soviet Union around 1924, we might jump to the conclusion that his views were in tune with the postulates of the Theory of Permanent Revolution. But the truth is that he retreated from that view concerning the developments on the Russian arena, and he went on the record on a number of occasions voicing dissent with Trotsky's view.

The political concept of the so-called 'permanent revolution', which came to life before 1848 as a scientific reflection of the Jacobin experience of 1789 up to the Thermidor, belongs to a historical period in which the big mass parties and trade unions did not exist yet; the society was, as it were, in a state of bigger fluidity in many respects.

1. Another statement agreeing to Trotsky's theory can be seen in this letter written on February 9, 1924 addressed to Togliatti: 'In the polemic that took place in Russia recently, it is clear to see that Trotsky and the opposition, given the protracted leave of Lenin from the leadership of the party, are seriously concerned with a comeback of the old mentality, which would be deleterious for the revolution. In demanding an enhanced intervention of the working class quarters in the life of the party and a cut in the powers of the bureaucracy, they are ultimately striving to uphold the socialist and working class nature of the revolution, impeding the piecemeal advent of that democratic dictatorship, a wrapping for an inchoate capitalism, that was the program raised by Zinoviev and others back in 1917. This seems to me to be situation of the Russian party, which is much more complicated and substantial than Urbani would be ready to admit; the only new element here is that Bukharin went over to the group of Zinoviev, Kamenev, Stalin.'

The countryside was more backward and a handful of cities had a virtual monopoly over politics and the life of the state; in some cases a single city would prevail (Paris in the case of France); a relatively rudimentary state apparatus existed, and a bigger autonomy of civil society with regards to the activity of the state was in place; a specific system of military forces and armed services nationwide; the national economies enjoyed more autonomy vis-à-vis the economic links with the world market, etc. In the period that followed 1870, with Europe's colonial expansion, things were turned over. The organizational relationships of the state, both locally and abroad, became more complex and solid, and the 1848 formula of 'permanent revolution' is developed and overcome in political science by the formula of a 'civil hegemony'. (...) This issue arose in all the modern countries, but not in those backward countries and the colonies, where forms long disappeared and superseded elsewhere still prevail.²

Gramsci is commenting here on the first versions of the theory of permanent revolution, which arose in a specifically Russian and European context, not its definite formulation of 1929. Gramsci had been in jail for three years already then, and we assume that he never got acquainted with it. The theory of permanent revolution, as it was codified after the Chinese revolution, laid a special emphasis in 'those backward countries and the colonies, where forms long disappeared and superseded elsewhere still prevail.'

At any rate, if Gramsci's critique could be restricted to the nature of the European revolution itself, we can say that Trotsky clearly developed his views along the same lines, openly declaring that the nature of the epoch had changed since Marx's times. '...all the liberation movements of modern history, starting, for instance, with Holland's struggle for its independence, took on a national and democratic character. The awakening of those oppressed and carved-up nations, their fight for internal unification and to finish off foreign yoke, would have been impossible without a fight for political

2. Gramsci, Letters from Prison.

freedom. The French nation was consolidated amid the stormy unfolding of the democratic revolution in the late eighteenth century. The Italian and German nations were founded in the nineteenth century in the wake of a whole series of wars and revolutions. The powerful growth of the American nation, which fought for its freedom already in the insurrection of the eighteenth century, was eventually guaranteed by the victory of the North over the South in the Civil War. Neither Mussolini nor Hitler invented nationhood. Patriotism, in the modern sense of the word -o more precisely, in a bourgeois sense- is a product of the nineteenth century. (...) Hitler did not fight as a rank and file soldier in 1914-18 to unify the German nation, but in the name of a supra-national program, an imperialist one, which was codified in the notorious formula 'Organize Europe!' unified under the rule of German militarism. (...) It is true that war, like all the great commotions shaking history, brought to light a number of problems and also furthered national revolutions in those backward quarters of Europe, tsarist Russia and the Austro-Hungarian Empire among them. But these were only the delayed echoes of an epoch long gone.³

In the new epoch, the problematic relationship of the anti-colonial revolution and imperialism is anything but a trifle. The theory of permanent revolution, as a theory of socialist revolution worldwide, established a link between the colonies and the imperialist heartlands, which Gramsci tended to gloss over. Still worse, in a clear reversal of the legacy of the Comintern, which draw a sharp line between the oppressed and oppressive nations, Gramsci introduced a rather blurry division between 'the East and the West', which downplays those categories that Lenin had insisted upon so emphatically. Trotsky's approach to the links between the advanced democracies of the Western world and the backward forms of the East reads as follows: 'While wiping out democracy in the old capitalist metropolises, imperialism prevents at the same time the growth of democracy in the backward

3. Leon Trotsky, Nationalism and the Economy, November 1933.

countries. The fact that in the new epoch, not a single one of the colonies and semi-colonies accomplished a democratic revolution, above all in the realm of an agrarian revolution in the countryside, should be completely attributed to imperialism, which has become the main hindrance for both political and economic progress. Siphoning off the natural riches of the backward countries, and deliberately thwarting its industrial development along independent lines, the monopolistic tycoons and their governments give their financial, political and military support to the most reactionary and parasitic semi-feudal sections of the native exploiters. The agrarian barbarism artificially maintained nowadays is one of the most afflicting plagues of the contemporary world economy. The struggle of the colonial peoples for their liberation, skipping all in-between phases, has been transformed into a necessary fight against imperialism altogether. In this way, that struggle gets in tune with that of the proletariat in the metropolis. The colonial uprisings and wars shatter, in turn, the foundations of the capitalist world move than ever before, preventing at the same time its unlikely regeneration.⁴

Having said that, we should also bear in mind that even the early version of the theory of permanent revolution was never a mere continuation of Marx's '1848 formula'. Why is it that Gramsci makes a caricature out of Trotsky's theory? The permanent dynamics of the revolution in Marx is predicated upon an independent intervention of the proletariat, organized in its own party, one that should lead to raise permanent demands transcending petty bourgeois radical democracy -the proletariat should under no circumstance confine itself to a bourgeois program, not even so in the phase of democratic bourgeois revolutions of the nineteenth century. Trotsky would have agreed wholeheartedly with Gramsci's statement that 'Indeed, it is in 1870-71 at the abortive Commune alone that all the vestiges from 1789 die out. This means that the new class fighting for power inflicts a defeat to all the representatives of the old society who refuse to consider it as a relic of the past, and also to all those recently formed groups who consider the new structure nurtured by 1789 as something that has been overcome already. Besides, 1870-71 is a turn-about in the sense that all the principles presiding over the tactics and strategy inherited from 1789 are no longer efficacious -which were developed in an ideological fashion around 1848 and that came to be encompassed in the formula of 'permanent revolution'.⁵

Contrariwise, Trotsky's theory, which was codified in the context of the imperialist epoch, starts from a matter-of-fact assumption that the productive forces in the early twentieth century had reached their ma-

turity worldwide. These, in turn, were unevenly combined with Russia's old relationship of ownership, its ancient political forms and those still existent in all the backward countries. Hence, his theory did not anticipate a re-run of the same mechanic of the old bourgeois democratic revolutions in the style of those of 1848. It would be the proletariat now, not the liberal bourgeoisie, which had become reactionary through and through, the one poised to play a leading role and to abolish the relics from the feudal past. And by force of this very fact, given the new class dynamics in relation to Marx's time, they would go beyond the limits of bourgeois right, ushering in the phase of socialism. Such strategic perspective, outlined by Trotsky already in 1905, materialized in the Russian Revolution in 1917 -as Gramsci duly acknowledged in the letter quoted above. And it was Trotsky the only one to anticipate this for 'a backward Russia', precisely because unlike most of the Marxists of his day, who reasoned still 'according to Marx', the Russian revolutionary dialectically superseded the old formula -contrary to what Gramsci claims.

As far as the Italian revolution in the wake of Fascism's rise to power is concerned, Trotsky does not narrow his view to the alternative 'either socialism or Fascism'. He did not preclude the emergence of transitional periods. But, as he points out in his letter to the Italian Left Opposition, they should elucidate the nature of the transition itself. His theory is precisely a theory of the transition to proletarian revolution. However, from the perspective of the permanent revolution, '...does it mean that Italy cannot become once again, for some time, a parliamentary state or a 'democratic republic'? I believe -and I think we agree completely on this -that such perspective should not be ruled out. But it will not come about as the result of a bourgeois revolution; quite otherwise, it will be the abortion of an insufficiently ripe and premature proletarian revolution. Should a profound revolutionary crisis burst out and mass struggles ensue in the course of which the proletarian vanguard fails to seize power, the bourgeoisie will be likely to restore its rule on a 'democratic' basis.⁶

6. 'With regards to the 'anti-fascist revolution', the Italian question is inextricably linked to the fundamental problems cutting across world communism, i.e. the so-called theory of permanent revolution. From what we considered before, we are confronted now with the question revolving around the 'transitional' period in Italy. In the first place, we have to state clearly: a transition from what to what? A period of transition from a bourgeois (or else popular) revolution to a proletarian revolution is one thing. A period of transition of the Fascist dictatorship to the proletarian dictatorship, is a different kettle of fish. If we adopt the first outlook, we are confronted with the issue of bourgeois revolution, and we are only left with appraising the role of the proletariat in it. The question of the transitional period to the proletarian revolution will be posed later on. If we adopt the second outlook, we are then

A second clarification following from this is that Gramsci holds a perspective that partakes a permanent view of the developments on Italian soil at least. The main thrust of his approach to a revolutionary strategy for Italy, with all its peculiar structural features, and beyond the Fascist regime itself, goes in the direction of a scrutiny of the history of the nation. Such appraisal tries to fathom out the tasks the bourgeoisie had left undone, or had else worked out as it saw fit, in an incomplete and exclusive manner, especially those concerning the issue of the backward south and the peasant question -hence the description of the Risorgimento as a 'passive revolution'. He thus proceeds along the lines of a permanent view, as it was codified by Trotsky's theory, i.e., the bourgeois democratic tasks the bourgeoisie failed to accomplish in its heyday will only be completed by the proletariat dragging the peasant masses behind it, once the former has entered in its phase of decay and reaction. As we can clearly see in Gramsci's own concern, such issue was not only a question cutting across the colonial countries, but it also encompassed those countries of a backward bourgeois development.⁷

Trotsky's theory comprises that of Gramsci.

However, the contrary is not true -Gramsci's theory does not encompass Trotsky's. Gramsci reckoned with one of the permanent features of the revolution in his insights on Italy, i.e., the fact that a democratic revolution grew into a socialist revolution by means of a class alliance of the proletariat leading the peasantry. However, that is not enough to claim solidarity with the permanent revolution. And this is the case because the theory of permanent revolution is a theory of so-

confronted with the question of a whole series of battles, upheavals, changing situations, abrupt changes, which as a whole make up the different phases of the proletarian revolution. There can be many phases. But under no circumstance are we confronted with a bourgeois revolution, or else that mysterious hybrid, a 'popular' revolution...! Leon Trotsky, 'Questions of the Italian Revolution', Writings 1930.

7. 'With regards to those countries of a backward bourgeois development, particularly the colonies and semicolonies, the permanent revolution means that a complete and thoroughgoing achievement of their democratic purposes and their national emancipation can only be accomplished by means of the dictatorship of the proletariat, when the latter seizes power at the head of all the oppressed layers in society, the peasant masses first and foremost.' 'The agrarian question (...) puts the peasants, which make up the overwhelming majority of the population in the backward countries, in an exceptional position (...) Without the alliance of the proletariat with the peasants, the aims of the democratic revolution cannot be achieved, let alone be posed seriously'. Leon Trotsky, Thesis 3, Theory of Permanent Revolution.

4. Leon Trotsky, *Marxism and Our Epoch*.

5. Gramsci, *Notes on Machiavelli, on Politics and the Modern State*.

cialist revolution worldwide, especially in its mature formulation of 1929, thus being the only theoretical outlook challenging the pseudo-theory of 'socialism in one country' in a coherent manner.⁸ As Trotsky said in this regard: 'The program of the Communist International drafted by Bukharin, is eclectic to the bone. Such program represents a helpless attempt at conciliating the theory of socialism in one country with Marxist internationalism, which in turn, is inseparable from the permanent nature of international revolution (...).'⁹

Gramsci, for its part, stood by the program of the Comintern when such outlook prevailed. We are not saying that Gramsci stood for the right-wing orientation put forward by the Stalin-Bukharin bloc for the USSR in 1924-28 -which was codified in slogans such as the 'peasants should get richer', or else 'the peaceful assimilation of the kulak into socialism', etc. What we do claim is that his stance was predominantly reliant on the perspective of the Italian national revolution, and one of centrist conciliation with the Comintern's policies. In this sense, he addressed a letter to Palmiro Togliatti in which he criticized Amadeo Bordiga because he had rallied with the 'international minority' siding with the Left Opposition, at a time when, according to Gramsci, he should have stood by 'the national majority' within the Italian party.¹⁰ And he expressed this, not out of a conviction that a victorious proletarian revolution in Italy could have changed the political map of Europe, and thus the balance of forces within the Comintern. Far from that, Gramsci falls prey of a fatalistic view by giving a decisive weight to the partial retreat of the revolutionary forces, transforming what was an 'unstable equilibrium' of capitalism in the 1930s into something deeper than that, a delay in 'the disposition of the subjective forces'. This, in turn, underpins his methodological criterion that led him to analyze the period along

8. The theory of Stalin-Bukharin not only opposes in a mechanical fashion, in spite of the whole experience of the Russian revolutions, the socialist and the proletarian revolutions, but it also separates the national revolution from the international revolution. Those revolutions in the backward countries are assigned the only purpose of bringing forth a utopian regime of a democratic dictatorship, as opposed to the dictatorship of the proletariat. In doing so, they sow illusions and nourish fairy tales in the realm of politics, paralyzing the struggle of the proletariat for power in the East and holding back the victory of colonial revolutions elsewhere. From the standpoint of the theory raised by the epigones, the fact that the proletariat should seize power entails the victory of revolution (in a 90 per cent, according to Stalin's notorious dictum) and the onset of an epoch of national reforms. The theory of the evolution of the 'kulak' to socialism and that of the 'neutralization' of the world bourgeoisie are, for this reason, inseparable from the theory of socialism in one country... Leon Trotsky, *ibidem*

9. Thesis 14, *ibidem*

10. Cf Roberto Massari, Trotsky and Gramsci

the lines of the likely survival of capitalism, without any need for war, thus overcoming the 'catastrophic phase' and ushering in a period of 'passive revolutions.'

In stark contrast with this, Trotsky, relying on a political prognosis envisaging a new catastrophic phase, was getting ready to fight to change the policies of the Comintern, not only to build a 'minority' -although that was the outcome of the struggle. Gramsci, under pressure of the years spent in prison and isolation, seems to reason starting from the need to preserve the victory achieved in the Soviet Union out of his fear that the alliance between the working class and the peasantry, and the unity of the Russian party itself, might go down there. He thus gave in to the theory and the politics of 'socialism in one country'. Did he do it out of considering the preservation of this new 'position' conquered by the international proletariat was top priority -regardless of Stalinism- as long as no new positions were conquered? We cannot say for sure, but this leads us to the programmatic stance taken by each of these two revolutionaries.

The position, the maneuver and the transitional program

Gramsci's point of departure is the following: 'the 1848 formula of permanent revolution is developed and overcome in the realm of political science by the formula of 'civil hegemony'. And building upon this insight, he claims that, 'In the art of politics there occurs the same transformation than in the realm of military art; the war of maneuver is transformed into a war of position, and it could be said that a state will result victorious in a war insofar as it gets ready for that in times of peace very carefully. The solid structure of modern democracy, both considered as state organizations and as a network of associations of civil society, is for the art of politics what the 'trenches' and the fortresses of the frontline are for a war of positions. They turn the element of movement, which used to be 'everything' in classical warfare, into a merely 'auxiliary' element.'¹¹

The question with this statement is that all the ambiguities enshrined within this 'position-oriented' view of Gramsci, have been seized upon by reformism, be it of a Stalinist or Socialdemocratic strand, and turned into a brazen justification for a Kautskian-styled strategy of a 'war of attrition', taking over the 'trenches' in utter disregard for any movements of maneuver. The main thrust of this politics is to gain spaces within the interstices of the bourgeois regime with no insurrection or assault on the strongholds of power, which is a monstrous caricature of the legacy of the Italian communist.

In a similar way, there have been attempts

11. Gramsci, Letters from Prison

at making a caricature out of Trotsky, and is still done today in relation to Trotskyism (or at least the strands within it that still raise the need for a revolution), regarding them as advocates of a permanently ongoing offensive.

The truth is that, neither the discussion on the peace treaty between the recently-born Soviet Union and Germany -whatever the objections put by Lenin against the Brest-Litovsk negotiations-, nor the Second Congress of the Comintern where he, along with Lenin proclaimed themselves as the 'right-wing' against the ultraleftism of the German section, saw Trotsky adopt a voluntaristic approach predicated along the lines of a permanent offensive. Let us take a look at other important examples.

In his writings on Latin America, he displays a clever use of both the 'trenches' and the 'positions' when he proposes the defense of the oil nationalizations in Mexico decreed by the bourgeois nationalistic government of Lázaro Cárdenas. From that position conquered, he poses the need to reach new ones, such as the workers' management of the latter. On that occasion, he even gives the example of what the revolutionaries would do if they won the control of a local county hall. Of course, his line is a far cry from that of those former Trotskyists, now 'transformed' inside the Brazilian PT, controlling municipalities such as Porto Alegre and states like Rio Grande do Sul. He suggests they could be used as an operational platform to show the irrevocable need of achieving the dictatorship of the proletariat across the nation. Trotsky was not alien to the idea that 'the war will be won insofar as we get ready for that in times of peace very carefully'. With a view to that, he defined the Latin American governments of the 1930s as the outcome of a contradictory balance of forces between a young proletariat standing on one side, and foreign capital on the other, as the fundamental classes of the conflict. The feeble native bourgeoisie presided over the contenders through an 'unstable balance' (one of a relative peace); a political phenomenon he branded *sui generis* Bonapartism.

He also displayed, in the field of war itself, during the Russian Civil War in which he was the main politico-military leader, the ability to combine position and maneuver. On the other hand, during the Spanish Civil War, he opposed the Republican leadership's gradualist agenda, holding that new land should be expropriated and handed over to the peasants. Likewise, he advocated the nationalization of the factories and their management under workers' control, all socio-economic positions that should uphold the military advance of the Republican army on the territory -the maneuver. In turn, those new positions ('milestones of socialism') should not be left in wait for the victory of the civil war, as the Stalinists, the Socialdemocrats and the Anarchists held all

alike.

On the other hand, his idea of a 'political revolution' is a novel combination of the defense of the position conquered so far by the international proletariat, i.e. nationalized property in the USSR, with the perspective of a 'revolutionary overthrowing of the Thermidorian bureaucracy'. In this way, a new 'trench' would be conquered to further the combat for socialist revolution worldwide. Trotsky always stood apart from those who adopted an anti-defensist position with regards to the USSR: 'those who are not able to defend the positions conquered, will be unable to conquer new ones.'

On the eve of World War II, when its outbreak cannot be checked by 'revolutions from below' (after the defeats in France and Spain), Trotsky hammered its most audacious idea ever - the 'proletarian military policy'. This provided a guideline for intervening in the war, the most reactionary bourgeois 'institution' of all, but one that at the end of the day could be seized upon by revolutionaries as much as the parliament. The 'proletarian military policy' dictated that while revolutionaries should fight to enlighten the international proletariat as to the imperialist nature of the war, they would in turn implement specific tactics for the American worker who was anxious to fight against Hitler, and also for the Polish or French worker who was ready to seize arms against the national oppression of the Nazis in their occupied countries. The war, in Trotsky's view, was a cataclysmic event that 'put the objective and the subjective factors in tune'; he thus codified a policy that encompassed the so-called three 'moments' of the 'balance of forces' pointed out by Gramsci. The 'moment of the split' of the proletariat vis-à-vis their 'own' bourgeoisie, with a policy aimed at separating the 'worker in arms' from the routine draft into the imperialist armies. The 'political moment', in which the war and the 'national' aims do not entail an abating of the class struggle, thus bringing forth a new 'October' like the Russian one in the wake of the 1914-1918 conflict. The 'military moment' in which he poses a policy that builds upon that of Lenin for World War I, i.e. 'transform the imperialist war in a civil war' - taking on board also the new features, such as the defense of the Soviet Union or else the combat against national oppression in all the occupied countries.

Gramsci's 'moments' have often been regarded as separate phases, as a static structure (Gramsci's own formulations contribute to this), whereas Trotsky combines the different phases, tempos, the moments and the dynamic definitions as well. He follows Lenin, who in his definition of phases and situations, incorporates the tempo in the realm of revolutionary politics. The logic of the combination of the uneven features presides over the theory of permanent revolution, and also the method underpinning the transitional program.

That program was submitted for discussion in America, with all the complexities enshrined in the situation back then, in the conditions of Americanism and the new deal. Its logic opened new inroads, such as the audacious demand-exposé put to the Roosevelt administration around a genuine scheme of public works aimed at finishing off mass unemployment.

Perry Anderson states that, whereas Trotsky knew better the political regimes on European soil, and developed precise tactics accordingly - the radical democratic demand of a Constituent Assembly in France and Spain, for example -, it would be left to Gramsci to formulate the most distressing questions on how to overcome the most stable bourgeois democracies from the left. This would take on a new significance vis-à-vis the newly stabilized democracies in postwar Europe, whereas it was not a burning question in the pre-war period, when all the democratic regimes succumbed before Fascism and Bonapartism, or else extreme regimes such as the Popular Front were in place. But the Transitional Program contains demands such as the workers' control of production, which can be used as a lever by the proletariat to conquest new positions challenging private property altogether and laying the basis for sharper struggles - never mind that workers power is not a feasible perspective in the short term.

From the discussions with the American SWP prior to its adoption, this picture emerges with regards to the Transitional Program: the reformists considered it to be a 'maximum' program (they think in terms of positions alone), whereas the ultraleftist regarded it as a 'minimum' program (they think in terms of maneuver alone)¹². As a matter of fact, the Transitional Program and its method, contains minimum demands, as long as they keep 'their vital force' (as long as they are old positions worth defending), and it puts forward the conquest of new positions (sliding wage scale and working hours, workers' control over industry, up to soviets) that should be instrumental in the 'war of movement', i.e., the seizure of power by the proletariat. In achieving this, the proletariat is conquering, in turn, a new position, and a new trench on the national field for the socialist revolution worldwide.

Therefore, the Transitional Program, regarded from this standpoint, is a bridge, the passage from the position to the maneuver.

The class and the party

Finally, we would like to outline some issues to be developed in further works: the complex links between spontaneity and consciousness, between a genuinely revolutionary movement and the party, between the Marxist intelligentsia and the working class vanguard.

There are clearly two periods in Gramsci's

evolution, in which he ponders the relationship between the working class actions and the revolutionary party. The first one is the period of the publication of the *Ordine Nuovo*. Under sway of the 'Red biennium' in Italy in 1919-21 and the factory occupations in Turin, he regards the factory councils as 'the concrete form of a political development of new type that cannot be assimilated back through political maneuvers or political shifts engineered by the bourgeois state, due to the fact that they spring up from production itself.'¹³ This appraisal, which underestimates the conscious action of a revolutionary party, will be given the lie in Italy as well as Germany, where reformism proposed to go for a 'combined state' encompassing both a parliamentary republic and the workers' councils. This showed that, without a centralized revolutionary Marxist leadership, there is a fertile soil for all kinds of 'political maneuvers and partial shifts engineered by the state' aimed at undoing the self-organization drive of the masses.

Since the year 1926, at the Lyon Congress, Gramsci will adopt, in contrast with the 'Ordine Nuovo' period, an orientation clearly steered to party building. By and large, his shift meant a non-dialectical turn that will overrun many of his previous insights on the role of the workers' councils. His thesis of the time are notoriously influenced by the Zinovievite orientation of extolling the Communist Party 'cells' as the foundations for the organization of the working class. However, Gramsci's view on the party will take on a new twist in his writings from prison, along different lines from those 'substitutionist' views nourished by Stalinism that might have influenced him back then.

To the sole effect that we can sketch a schema of general notions and place Gramsci within them, we might say that there are three types of party, considering this issue from the standpoint of the relationship of Marxism with the revolutionary movement of the working class. First, there is the Kautskian party, that of Socialdemocratic reformism, which extols the moment of the tactic - i.e. the 'movement is everything'. Second, there is the Leninist party, which targets and separates the allies from the adversaries in line with strategic views - in 1917, Lenin said Trotsky had been the best Bolshevik once he had given up on unifying the party with the Mensheviks. Gramsci, in turn, in line with his insights on the role played by the ideologies in the rule of the modern state, will dwell on those aspects concerning the struggle on the 'third front' of party intervention, i.e. the ideological struggle - as Engels had already pointed out, the other two being the economic and political struggle. But in his notion of the party as a 'collective intellectual' one can see a hypertrophy of the ideological struggle, in which the role of the party as an educator

12. This was the case with the Italian communist Amadeo Bordiga

13. Notes on Machiavelli, on Politics and the Modern State.

of the mass movement of the working class is clearly over-rated. The predominant position of the intellectuals within a party would be instrumental in creating a new 'common sense' within the heart of the working class movement -Marxism. Paradoxically, Gramsci, who made significant contributions to political science by pointing to the 'working class consciousness' flowing from the workers' councils, later on switched to a view placing the cultural and ideological struggle above politics. Besides this, he glossed over the active intertwining between the party and the soviets, in which 'the educator needs to be educated'. The Italian CP in the postwar will seize upon this slip, distorting it along completely reformist lines, to promote the culture and the ideological debates with the reformists, while they became a mainstay propping bourgeois democracy at the same time.

Trotsky will be the continuation of Bolshevism's coming of age. In the wake of the experience of the first workers' soviets back in 1905, the latter will correct the thesis of Lenin's *What is to be done?*, which held that class consciousness could only be infused to the working class movement from 'the outside'. As to the question revolving around the soviets and the party, he claimed, relying on the experience of the Russian revolution: 'It would be a gross blunder to put an equal sign between the strength of the Bolshevik party and that flowing from the soviets themselves: the latter represented an infinitely more powerful force, but lacking the party, they would become completely helpless.'¹⁴ From then on, Trotsky will become a firm advocate of the Leninist party of combat.

Quelle: <http://www.ft.org.ar/estrategia/ei19/ei19inglestrotskygramsci2.htm>

14. History of the Russian Revolution