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Volume 2

Issue 2 *Gramsci on factory councils / Gramsci in  
today's world*

Article 2

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2017

# Table of contents

Derek Boothman

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## Table of contents

### **Abstract**

Table of contents

### **Keywords**

Table of contents

## EDITORIAL

Derek Boothman

1

### PRIMA PARTE / PART ONE: GRAMSCI SUI CONSIGLI DI FABBRICA / ON FACTORY COUNCILS

1. Flavio Silvestrini

*Gramsci e un bilancio (preventivo) dell'esperienza rivoluzionaria a Torino*

3

2. Antonio Gramsci

*Il movimento torinese dei Consigli di Fabbrica* ("L'Ordine Nuovo", 14 marzo 1921)

e *Il movimento comunista a Torino* ("L'Internazionale Comunista", no. 14, novembre 1920)

17

3. Antonio Gramsci

*The Turin Communist Movement*

40

### SECONDA PARTE / PART TWO: GRAMSCI NEL MONDO DI OGGI / IN TODAY'S WORLD

4. Panagiotis Sotiris

*From the Nation to the People of a Potential New Historical Bloc:*

*Rethinking Popular Sovereignty through Gramsci*

52

5. Giovanni Semeraro

*The Economic-Political Crisis in Brazil: a Reading from Some Reflections of Gramsci*

89

6. Carlos Hiroo Saito and Andréa A. Azevedo

*Organic Intellectuals: Legitimizing Agribusiness Production in Brazil*

107

### TERZA PARTE / THIRD PART: RECENSIONI / REVIEWS

7. Francesca Antonini

*Antonio Gramsci* edited by / a cura di Mark McNally

133

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Article 1

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## Editorial

Derek Boothman

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## **Editorial**

### **Abstract**

Editorial

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Editorial

## *Editorial*

This issue of the IGJ consists of two distinct parts followed by a book review, which will now be a regular feature. The first part is dedicated to the longest essay written by Gramsci before the celebrated one on the Southern Question, interrupted by his arrest. The essay we publish here exists in two forms, *Il movimento comunista di Torino*, and *Il movimento torinese dei Consigli di Fabbrica*. The former was published in the Comintern journal “Communist International” (no. 14, November 1920) in its four languages – English, French, German and Russian; while these last three translations are available with greater or lesser ease, the English translation has not come to light despite detailed searches of library holdings. The second version of the essay was published in “L’Ordine Nuovo”, in its format as a daily, on 14 March 1921, retranslated from the German translation in “Kommunistische Internationale”, and bearing several modifications. For comparison purposes, the two Italian versions are presented in parallel columns, with key concepts and phrases as near as possible aligned; due however to the variations between the two versions, sometimes the text of one leads and the other lags, and sometimes *vice versa*. The article as printed in “L’Ordine Nuovo” is in the left hand column while in the right hand column, readers have access, for the first time ever in Italian, to the text – with its occasional idiosyncratic spelling – of Gramsci’s original manuscript, now held in the Comintern archives; his cancellations are shown as underlined barred words, e.g. “~~Neppure un mes~~”, while subsequent additions, corrections and rethinks are indicated in blue, e.g. “~~operaia~~”). Text divisions are shown as in the “Ordine Nuovo” article and the manuscript itself. Flavio Silvestrini, an Italian expert on this period of Gramsci’s activity, gives a political introduction to the two versions, while further information on the manuscript and its typescript is found in the translator’s preface to the editorially-contributed English language translation.

The second part of this issue of the IGJ, devoted to current political and economic problems, has articles exclusively in English. It opens with a thought-provoking article by Panagiotis Sotiris, who uses Gramscian concepts – that of the historical bloc, together with others such as “nation-State”, “nation-people” and the “national-popular collective will”, in his analysis of problems of popular and

national (and post-national) sovereignty, linked among other things to ethnicity, im/migration and border questions. He engages in a critical discussion with others on the left – Balibar, Bouteldja and Khiari, Habermas, Sapir, Sassen to name but some – and points the way forward to the construction of what, in Gramscian terms, would be a new “people-nation”, having not a common history and shared values - those of an often mythical past – but a common future, a “people-to-come” to cite Deleuze’s phrase, based on movements of emancipation and struggle by the subaltern classes.

The other two articles in the second half of the journal are devoted to Brazil, one of the Latin American countries where, through a cluster of inter-related concepts, Gramsci’s influence has since the 1960s been crucial for left forces in their interpretation of history and politics. The first of these is by Giovanni Semeraro, who initially wrote before the destitution of Dilma Rousseff and the return of the ‘white oligarchy’; the original text – verb tenses etc. – is amended to take account of these events. Using in particular the Gramscian notions of “organic crisis” and “Caesarism”, the author succinctly analyses the evolution of the economic and political situation in Brazil, the problems and weaknesses of the Brazilian left in its Lula-Rousseff form, and the occupation of key positions in Brazilian society by international corporations, finance capital and the corporate media, all posing as saviours of the country.

The second article on Brazil, by Carlos Hiroo Saito and Andréa A. Azevedo, deals with the conflict between conservation and agribusiness production in Brazil. While sometimes conservationists have won victories, e.g. in blocking the construction of potentially damaging dams in the Amazon basin, a big question mark hangs over agricultural, especially soybean, production. The authors deal with the role of organic intellectuals, the confusion still reigning among left forces on their definition, and analyse as a prime example the role of ex-State governor, now Minister of Agriculture, Blairo Maggi, in regard to the agribusiness-conservation question.

In the third part, Francesca Antonini reviews *Antonio Gramsci*, edited by the well-known Anglophone scholar Mark McNally.

Last, it is with deep regret that we record the passing of André Tosel, a member of our journal’s scientific committee, a distinguished philosopher and leading Gramsci expert whose contribution will be sorely missed.





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2017

# Gramsci e un bilancio (preventivo) dell'esperienza rivoluzionaria a Torino

Flavio Silvestrini

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# Gramsci e un bilancio (preventivo) dell'esperienza rivoluzionaria a Torino

## Abstract

*Gramsci: a (Provisional) Balance-sheet of the Revolutionary Experience in Turin.*

Gramsci's report on the 1919-1920 council movement in Turin, here published for the first time in its original Italian, may fairly be said to represent a phase of passage in the (intellectual) biography of the young Sardinian. In particular, there are four interpretative elements that allow us to put the importance of this process in perspective. First, there is the balance-sheet he draws up of the Italian revolution and its possible developments; then, there is his re-evaluation of the role of the Party within a systematic theory of proletarian institutions; next, we see the theoretical-practical link-up with the top leadership of the Communist International; Gramsci specifies his own position both inside and, finally, outside the maximalist current in the light of the republication of the article in "L'Ordine Nuovo", in its form as a daily paper, in March 1921.

*Gramsci e un bilancio (preventivo) dell'esperienza rivoluzionaria a Torino*

Il resoconto gramsciano sul movimento consiliare torinese del 1919-20 – di seguito pubblicato per la prima volta nella sua originale versione italiana – può, a buon diritto, individuare una fase di passaggio nella biografia (intellettuale) del giovane sardo. In particolare, quattro elementi di lettura consentono di inquadrare la rilevanza di questo processo: il bilancio sulla rivoluzione italiana e sui possibili sviluppi; la rivalutazione del ruolo del Partito all'interno di una sistematica dottrina degli istituti proletari; il collegamento teorico-pratico con i vertici dell'Internazionale Comunista; la specificazione della propria posizione dentro il massimalismo e, infine, fuori da esso anche alla luce della ripubblicazione dell'articolo, sull'«Ordine Nuovo» quotidiano, nel marzo 1921.

## Keywords

Turin Council Movement, Party and Institutions, Communist International, Socialist Party

## *Gramsci e un bilancio (preventivo) dell'esperienza rivoluzionaria a Torino*

Flavio Silvestrini

Il resoconto gramsciano sul movimento consiliare torinese del 1919-20 – di seguito pubblicato per la prima volta nella sua originale versione italiana – può, a buon diritto, individuare una fase di passaggio nella biografia (intellettuale) del giovane sardo. In particolare, quattro elementi di lettura consentono di inquadrare la rilevanza di questo processo: il bilancio sulla rivoluzione italiana e sui possibili sviluppi; la rivalutazione del ruolo del Partito all'interno di una sistematica dottrina degli istituti proletari; il collegamento teorico-pratico con i vertici dell'Internazionale Comunista; la specificazione della propria posizione dentro il massimalismo e, infine, fuori da esso anche alla luce della ripubblicazione dell'articolo, sull'«Ordine Nuovo» quotidiano, nel marzo 1921.

1. Nel luglio del 1920 Gramsci ripercorreva per la prima volta con uno sguardo comprensivo i momenti salienti di due anni di esperienza consiliare e rivoluzionaria a Torino. Dei fatti narrati egli era stato testimone in prima persona, come animatore e redattore del progetto culturale, editoriale e politico dell'«Ordine Nuovo». Con il conforto di questa puntuale indagine storica, l'Autore riprendeva ipotesi di lettura del tempo presente al centro della propria riflessione fin dall'esordio nel socialismo torinese: la specificità rivoluzionaria del contesto torinese, con un assetto produttivo segnato dalla presenza della moderna industria metallurgica; il massiccio sviluppo di proletariato industriale, che, congiuntamente allo svuotamento della borghesia cittadina, a seguito dello spostamento della capitale a Roma, aveva creato la «Pietrogrado d'Italia»; un più ampio quadro storico, infine, per collocare Torino come epicentro della Rivoluzione italiana.

Alla lettura della struttura materiale della società, affiancava le profonde modificazioni spirituali intervenute nel proletariato, catalizzate dall'esperienza della guerra e dalla sua coda rivoluzionaria in Russia e, in seguito, in Italia. La storia aveva subito una profonda

ac-celerazione, che non aveva solamente logorato gli istituti tradizionali della borghesia ma, con essi, gli strumenti analitici dell'originaria let-tura marxiana, come pure tattiche e strategie dei partiti socialisti. Le esperienze di autogoverno dell'officina, la resistenza all'oppressione capitalista testimoniavano l'emergenza di un tempo nuovo, affatto incerto, in cui collocare l'intervento dell'intellettuale-rivoluzionario.

Sulla rapida e profonda maturazione del proletariato torinese Gramsci rinveniva le ragioni storiche dell'«Ordine Nuovo», progetto complesso di educazione (orientata alla pratica) politica. Sviluppare la dottrina consiliare per il controllo della fabbrica aveva comportato la prima esperienza di governo diretto del produttore (nei luoghi della produzione), ma doveva leggersi come momento germinale di una futuribile democrazia operaia, che dalla singola unità di lavoro avrebbe informato lo Stato nuovo.

Divisa «politicamente» la fabbrica in «reparti» e «squadre di lavorazione», ognuna di esse aveva eletto un rappresentante (commissario) «con mandato imperativo e revocabile»; l'assemblea dei delegati di tutte le squadre in tutti i reparti aveva formato il Consiglio, organo rappresentativo di tutta la fabbrica; tra i suoi membri, era stato eletto il Comitato esecutivo, governo dell'officina come unità di produzione. Quest'ultimo, coordinandosi con gli omologhi sviluppati in altre realtà produttive della città, avrebbe dato origine a un «Comitato per tutta la città per organizzare la propaganda, compilare piani di lavoro, studiare i piani e le proposte delle singole fabbriche e dei singoli operai e curare tutto l'insieme del movimento».

Dalle questioni tecniche ed economiche, collegate alla gestione dell'attività produttiva, si era giunti a valutare il precipitato politico del nuovo ordine nella vita di fabbrica. Dal maggio del 1919, iniziando dai movimenti spontanei nella fabbrica durante la Grande Guerra, si era potuto valutare la maturità di un proletariato pronto a un utilizzo antagonistico del vecchio istituto della Commissione interna: «L'Ordine Nuovo» era nato ponendosi «il problema del loro sviluppo» e cercando di dare loro «nuova forma»<sup>1</sup> in senso rivoluzionario. Il passaggio, nelle officine metallurgiche torinesi, a

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<sup>1</sup> Firmato «L'Ordine Nuovo», *Ai Commissari di reparto delle officine Fiat Centro e Brevetti*, «L'Ordine Nuovo», I, 18, 13 set. 1919, in A. Gramsci, *L'Ordine Nuovo* (1919-1920), a cura di V. Gerratana e A. Santucci, Einaudi, Torino, 1987 (nel seguito ON), pp. 208-212, alla p. 208.

un istituto profondamente ripensato in termini rivoluzionari, il Consiglio di fabbrica, aveva, in ultimo, sganciato la rappresentanza operaia da un sistema di «democrazia borghese» per istituire i prodromi di una «democrazia operaia».

Una comunità proletaria consapevole e coesa, non solo da un punto di vista tecnico-organizzativo, ma per la forte identità (di cultura) politica, affrontava, nella primavera del 1920, la reazione della classe capitalista. Come Gramsci testimoniava nello scritto che proponiamo, dopo un mese di sciopero dei metallurgici la resa era stata determinata non solo dalla militarizzazione della città invocata dalla classe proprietaria, ma, soprattutto, dall'inadeguatezza della dirigenza socialista.

I richiami alle responsabilità del Sindacato e, più ancora, del Partito, affatto inadeguati a guidare il processo rivoluzionario innescato dal proletariato, erano nel testo continui. Eventi incontestabili avevano tracciato il solco tra il movimento torinese e il Partito socialista, culminando, proprio nei giorni più drammatici dello sciopero, con lo spostamento da Torino, considerata insicura proprio per le agitazioni operaie, a Milano del Consiglio Nazionale (18-22 aprile): nel capoluogo piemontese, il proletariato lottava «per difendere il Consiglio operaio di fabbrica, [...] il primo istituto rappresentativo in cui era incarnato il potere proletario», a Milano, i vertici del Partito riflettevano «sul modo di creare i Soviet, sulla forma da dare al potere politico conquistato dal proletariato», ciò si era tradotto nell'abbandonare il proletariato torinese alla reazione delle forze borghesi, compattate per annientare quel potere operaio «già conquistato» nelle fabbriche.

Al di là della critica verso tempi e modi della rivoluzione, questioni che Gramsci aveva già cominciato ad affrontare da almeno due anni, declinando una compiuta dottrina delle istituzioni rivoluzionarie, i fatti di aprile imposero alla sua lettura una questione cogente. Avverso il movimento rivoluzionario non aveva operato, come logico, solo «la borghesia sfruttatrice», ma anche «i capi opportunisti e traditori» del socialismo italiano.

2. Da tempo Gramsci aveva individuato i termini di questa duplicazione, dando netta prevalenza alla soluzione della *questione interna* al movimento operaio: se, in prospettiva ampia, la

rivoluzione avrebbe portato al confronto «tra istituzioni proletarie e istituzioni borghesi», questo sarebbe conseguito al confronto «tra le varie istituzioni stesse del proletariato»<sup>2</sup>.

Per tutto il 1919, Gramsci aveva contrapposto un Partito, sorto in età borghese e segnato dalla cultura della rappresentanza liberal-parlamentare, a un istituto nuovo, il Consiglio, frutto della cultura operaia in una fase storica di maturata consapevolezza del proletariato. Per evitare un condizionamento del primo verso il secondo, nei primi mesi di vita dell'«Ordine Nuovo», Gramsci aveva previsto un Partito “leggero”<sup>3</sup>: con un ruolo “negativo”, all'interno del Parlamento, esso avrebbe isterilito le funzioni collegate alla legalità borghese; con un ruolo “positivo”, cooperando alla nuova rappresentanza consiliare, avrebbe curato l'educazione schietta-mente comunista dei suoi protagonisti. In questa prima fase della rivoluzione, il Nostro aveva voluto evitare che il processo consiliare venisse sottratto alle sue forze propulsive, privilegiandone la spinta liberatorie: il Partito avrebbe garantito il proficuo svolgersi di un «atto» che sarebbe rimasto del proletariato. Se, da un lato, egli teorizzava il ruolo del Partito nelle prime fasi della Rivoluzione, dall'altro, concretamente, si prodigava ad applicare quei dettami nella propria realtà, facendo dell'«Ordine Nuovo» il riferimento politico-culturale del proletariato torinese<sup>4</sup>.

<sup>2</sup> Non firmato, *La settimana politica* [XIII], *Le elezioni*, «L'Ordine Nuovo», I, 27, 22 nov. 1919, ON, pp. 328-330, alla p. 328.

<sup>3</sup> Non condivisibile sembra l'opinione di Battini, il quale, ravvisando nella dottrina consiliare gramsciana aspetti di «sindacalismo rivoluzionario», arriva ad affermare che «il partito, come istituto politico, è subordinato, per Gramsci, al potere organizzato dei produttori» (M. Battini, *Note su Gramsci nel 1918-20*, «Rivista di storia contemporanea», VII, 3, lug.-set. 1978, p. 354-378). In verità, sembra che le finalità di Gramsci siano del tutto diverse, in quanto si pone il problema di non costringere nelle maglie esterne e burocratiche del Partito l'attività libera del proletariato di fabbrica; il Partito, però, rappresenta quella gerarchia, di idee e di direzione politica, con cui il proletariato rivoluzionario crea ordine durante il processo rivoluzionario.

<sup>4</sup> L'ipotesi è accennata da Martin Clark, il quale però si limita a «tracciare un parallelo [...] tra l'attività culturale dell'«Ordine Nuovo», intesa a rafforzare e a consolidare una coscienza rivoluzionaria già presente negli operai, e l'attività politica del partito, mirante a guidare e a rafforzare l'attività politica dei Consigli di Fabbrica» (M. N. Clark, *Il concetto gramsciano di rivoluzione (1919-20)*, in *Gramsci e la cultura contemporanea*, cit., II, pp. 161-171, alla p. 165). Nell'esperienza pratica del movimento consiliare torinese, di fatto, «L'Ordine Nuovo» opera come voce della sezione cittadina del Partito, implicando funzioni che sono contemporaneamente politiche e culturali; alla stessa maniera, proprio l'attività dell'«Ordine Nuovo» è posta da Gramsci a modello da imitare per le altre sezioni del Partito già alla fine del 1919. Assai efficaci, nella medesima direzione, le parole di D'Orsi, per cui «L'Ordine Nuovo» deve essere considerato «motore propulsivo del movimento dei Consigli di fabbrica, suo centro, suo organo» (A. D'Orsi, *Introduzione. Antonio Gramsci e la sua Torino*, in A. Gramsci, *La nostra città*

Per una prima fase del pensiero ordinovista gramsciano, che possiamo racchiudere nel 1919, il giovane sardo aveva voluto programmare l'attività del gruppo torinese a modello di quella che avrebbe dovuto svolgere un partito schiettamente rivoluzionario.

L'esperienza di aprile del 1920 aveva definitivamente spostato il piano della riflessione: non si trattava più di definire i rapporti di forza tra Partito e sistema dei Consigli, chiarendone l'ordine di intervento nella rivoluzione, ma di rendere il primo istituto centrale nei processi rivoluzionari praticabili dal secondo. Eliminato qualsiasi conflitto di attribuzione con il Consiglio, al Partito veniva attribuito un corredo di funzioni molto più ampio, parte del quale, in passato, già previsto per il Consiglio.

A pochi giorni dalla fallita esperienza rivoluzionaria, intervenendo l'8 maggio 1920 sulle pagine dell'«Ordine Nuovo», Gramsci indicava significativamente le strade *Per un rinnovamento del Partito socialista italiano*: espellere «i non comunisti rivoluzionari»<sup>5</sup>, rinunciare a qualsiasi ipotesi di compromesso con il riformismo al fine di un'illusoria unità del socialismo italiano. Solo un Partito fatto di rivoluzionari, precisava, avrebbe costituito «la condizione fondamentale e indispensabile per tentare qualsiasi esperimento di Soviet»<sup>6</sup>. Per la prima volta, nell'analisi della situazione italiana, Gramsci proiettava il ruolo del Partito dalla fase di formazione dei Consigli a quella in cui si sarebbe istituito lo Stato proletario, facendone il raccordo tra quel «germe» di democrazia operaia praticabile in un sistema di realtà produttive (industrie e campagne) governate dai produttori e la compiuta dittatura politica del proletariato.

In verità, già all'inizio dell'anno, a seguito del Consiglio Nazionale del PSI di Firenze, Gramsci aveva iniziato a porre la questione di un rinnovamento del Partito<sup>7</sup>: salvarlo dalla crisi era il modo per salvaguardare il nuovo potere proletario, poiché mentre «gli avvenimenti» significativi della lotta operaia si svolgevano, il Partito rimaneva «assente»<sup>8</sup>. È la distanza tra la realtà storica

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*futura. Scritti torinesi (1911-1922)*, a cura di A. D'Orsi, Roma, Carocci, 2004, pp. 17-97, alla p. 69).

<sup>5</sup> Non firmato, *Per un rinnovamento del Partito socialista italiano*, «L'Ordine Nuovo», II, 1, 8 mag. 1920, ON, pp. 510-517.

<sup>6</sup> *Ivi*, p. 516.

<sup>7</sup> Non firmato, *Primo: rinnovare il partito*. L'articolo appare sotto la rubrica *La settimana politica* [XVII], «L'Ordine Nuovo», I, 35, 24-31 gen. 1920, ON, pp. 394-398.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibidem*.

consiliare, da Gramsci giudicata rivoluzionaria, e l'azione politica (del Partito), altrimenti giudicata riformista, a essere sottoposta a giudizio. Da Firenze erano emerse solo «discussioni confuse, incerte» che non proiettavano la Direzione massimalista verso posizioni rivoluzionarie, ma che, al contrario, dimostravano come fosse tenuta in scacco «dagli opportunisti e dai riformisti»<sup>9</sup>.

Nei mesi a seguire<sup>10</sup>, la teoria gramsciana focalizzava con sempre più profondità la questione del Partito; di contro, almeno nella scrittura, il Consiglio diveniva marginale. Nell'ottobre del 1920, al termine della nuova, drammatica occupazione delle fabbriche<sup>11</sup>, Il Partito assumeva definitivamente molte funzioni attribuite fino a pochi mesi prima al Consiglio: si completava, per questa via, un percorso teorico certamente innescato dai fatti di aprile e di cui il saggio che proponiamo aveva dato l'abbrivo decisivo. Se, nel pieno dell'impegno per la costruzione del movimento consiliare torinese, Gramsci aveva affermato che «il Consiglio di fabbrica è il modello dello Stato proletario»<sup>12</sup>, nel marzo del 1920, quando stava già maturando la questione del Partito nuovo, era quest'ultimo ad essere «un modello di ciò che sarà domani lo Stato operaio»<sup>13</sup>,

<sup>9</sup> Non firmato, *Programma d'azione della sezione socialista torinese*, «L'Ordine Nuovo», I, 35, 24-31 gen. 1920, ON, pp. 399-402, alla p. 399.

<sup>10</sup> Interessante rilevare come la critica abbia individuato in varie date, corrispondenti ad altrettanti momenti della lotta rivoluzionaria, il cambio di dottrina gramsciana sul Partito. Come visto, si possono individuare gli inizi già nel gennaio del 1920, quando, dopo il Consiglio Nazionale di Firenze, Gramsci entra in aperto contrasto con la maggioranza massimalista. La maggior parte degli autori individua invece nell'esperienza fallita di aprile il fattore scatenante; altri, invece, sottolineano l'importanza dell'altra grande iniziativa di settembre (cfr. C. Pillon, *L'Ordine nuovo e il movimento operaio torinese: l'organico disegno di democrazia proletaria teorizzato da Gramsci tra la fine della guerra e l'occupazione delle fabbriche*, «Calendario del popolo», XXXVIII, 443, apr. 1982, pp. 640-650). Non è nemmeno da sottovalutare, come si è cercato di rendere nel presente scritto, che le successive battute d'arresto del movimento rivoluzionario internazionale approfondiscano la frattura tra Gramsci e il Partito socialista (cfr. F. Livorsi, *Gramsci e il bolscevismo (1914-1920)*, in Fondazione Istituto piemontese Antonio Gramsci (a cura di), *Il giovane Gramsci e la Torino d'inizio secolo* (Atti del convegno, Torino, 20-21 novembre 1997), Torino, Rosenberg & Sellier, 1998, pp. 101-124, alle pp. 115-116).

<sup>11</sup> L'iniziativa di settembre, in mano alle dirigenze sindacali, era stata una ritorsione obbligata di fronte alla reale minaccia di serrata da parte degli industriali. Finita politicamente il 19 settembre, con la firma a Roma dell'accordo salariale da parte di Buozzi, entro la fine del mese l'occupazione terminava in tutte le officine metallurgiche. Sulle agitazioni in fabbrica del 1920 si vedano P. Spriano, *L'occupazione delle fabbriche. Settembre 1920*, Torino, Einaudi, 1964; 1920, *la grande speranza*, numero monografico di «Il ponte», XXVI, 10, ott. 1970, in particolare i saggi di M.L. Salvadori, *Cinquant'anni dopo*, pp. 1111-1135; V. Castronovo, *La grande industria: giochi interni e linea di fondo*, pp. 1198-1221.

<sup>12</sup> *Sindacati e Consigli*, cit., p. 238.

<sup>13</sup> Non firmato, *L'unità proletaria*, «L'Ordine Nuovo», I, 39, 28 feb.-6 mar. 1920, ON, pp.



mentre, come affermava nell'articolo che segue, il Consiglio sarebbe stata «immagine della Società comunista quale sarà realizzata attraverso la dittatura proletaria»<sup>14</sup>.

Rimanendo forma primigenia della sovranità proletaria, nel luogo del conflitto economico, nell'estate del 1920 Gramsci ipotizzava che il Consiglio avrebbe dato forma anche al Partito nuovo<sup>15</sup>; collegato alla nascita del Partito sarebbe stato il passaggio verso la rappresentanza politica sovietica in uno Stato governato dal proletariato; infine, il governo di fabbrica avrebbe informato tutti i rapporti umani di quella società comunista successiva all'esaurimento storico del ruolo dello Stato.

In verità, demandando alla fase conclusiva della rivoluzione, dopo l'abolizione dello Stato, il ritorno del Consiglio come istituto centrale della vita proletaria, Gramsci non intendeva disconoscere – e l'esperienza torinese in ciò lo confortava – i meriti teorici e pratici<sup>16</sup>. D'altronde, solo attraverso il movimento consiliare era stato

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438-443, alla p. 439.

<sup>14</sup> Equilibrata, sul punto, la lettura di Spriano, il quale, pur riconoscendo la ragionevolezza di alcune critiche verso il Gramsci ordinovista, indeciso tra Consigli e Partito o tra fini e mezzi, contestualizza queste incongruenze del testo in un processo di «lotta politica»; in questo modo si capisce perché «non solo si vada verso uno spostamento di accenti, ma verso una delineazione nuova del Partito che si arricchisce proprio del movimento reale dei Consigli, che scaturisce da esso, nella comprensione della profondità del fatto rivoluzionario» (P. Spriano, *«L'Ordine Nuovo» e i Consigli di fabbrica*, Torino 1971, p. 74). Anche l'analisi di Caracciolo si muove in questa direzione: il rapporto tra gli istituti rivoluzionari, nel «periodo dell'«Ordine Nuovo» settimanale, che va dall'estate del 1919 fino alla vigilia del Congresso di Livorno, è imperniato dapprima nella ricerca e nella lotta intorno alla formula dei Consigli, cui fa seguito negli ultimi sette o otto mesi con speciale forza la battaglia per un radicale rinnovamento del Partito socialista» (A. Caracciolo, *Sulla questione partito-consigli di fabbrica nel pensiero di Gramsci*, «Ragionamenti», II, 10-12, mag.-ott. 1957, pp. 224-231, alla p. 225). Il passaggio non è traumatico, non sembra «che vi sia nel pensiero di Gramsci un disinteresse per il partito neppure nei momenti di massimo impegno intorno ai Consigli di fabbrica, non sembra d'altronde che le accresciute preoccupazioni per il partito facciano mai dimenticare l'istanza che chiameremo consiliare» (*ibidem*). Secondo Bellamy e Schecter, «once Gramsci decided that the foundations of the Council State were organic and bore no relation to a social contract that the worker could annul at any time, the Party could be the “maximum agent” of the revolution and new order; but its importance was still surpassed by the Council, at least up until to Turin general strike of April 1920» (R. Bellamy □ D. Schecter, *Gramsci and the Italian State*, Manchester-New York, Manchester University Press, 1993, p. 36). Rilevanti le conclusioni di Schecter anche per valutare l'impatto dell'esperienza consiliare sul rapporto che Gramsci successivamente istituisce tra società civile e Stato (D. Schecter, *Gramsci and the Theory of Industrial Democracy*, Aldershot, Avebury, 1991).

<sup>15</sup> Non firmato, *I gruppi comunisti*, «L'Ordine Nuovo», II, 10, 17 lug. 1920, ON, pp. 590-594.

<sup>16</sup> Assai efficace, su questo aspetto, la riflessione di Piotte: «l'échec, en 1919-20, du mouvement des Conseils rend donc Gramsci conscient de la nécessité du parti de type bolchevique. Mais il ne sous-évalue pas pour cela la portée des Conseils dont la valeur consiste à avoir suscité un fort mouvement de masse qui donna sa base ouvrière au Parti communiste et

possibile per il Nostro inquadrare con precisione la questione del Partito. Questo avrebbe fatto proprie le dinamiche della rappresentanza consiliare e, per quanto non composto da soli operai, sarebbe nato per la solerte iniziativa del proletariato industriale, educatosi nella vita dei Consigli. In ultimo, si sarebbe reciso ogni legame con l'epoca borghese, in cui era sorto anche il Partito socialista, mentre si sarebbe gettato un ponte verso una civiltà ulteriore, quell'"ordine nuovo" determinato dalla volontà della classe operaia<sup>17</sup>.

3. Non si può efficacemente collocare lo scritto che presentiamo se, assieme alla parabola culturale di Gramsci nel socialismo italiano, in misura crescente critica un Partito in cui trovava sempre più difficile collocazione, non si valuta il rapporto con l'Internazionale Comunista. Tradotto sulle pagine dell'organo ufficiale dell'IC, il saggio divenne, durante i lavori del II Congresso (19 luglio-7 agosto 1920), il testo di riferimento per valutare lo stato di "salute" della Rivoluzione e del socialismo in Italia<sup>18</sup>.

Una conoscenza molto recente, invero, quella di Lenin e dei capi del bolscevismo verso il gruppo torinese, considerando il fatto che le poche linee di comunicazione tra socialismi italiano e russo erano state, fino a quel momento, curate dalla dirigenza massimalista di Serrati. Non solo, nessun "torinese" prese parte alla delegazione del PSI che, partita per una visita in Russia (propiziata anche dal governo Nitti per normalizzare le relazioni con il nuovo stato russo), si trasformò, a ranghi ridotti, nella rappresentanza del socialismo italiano al II Congresso.

Questa triangolazione tra riflessione gramsciana, condizione del socialismo italiano – in particolar modo dirigenza, gruppo parlamentare e sindacato – e vertici della Terza Internazionale è, d'altronde, testimoniata nell'*incipit* dell'articolo che presentiamo: un

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à avoir su affermir et canaliser les poussées spontanées de la base» (J.-M. Pottier, *La pensée politique de Gramsci*, Montréal, Parti pris, 1970, p. 146, ma anche Paris, Éd. Anthropos, 1970).

<sup>17</sup> Per un puntuale e recente contributo sulla consequenzialità dell'analisi gramsciana della Guerra e sul ruolo del proletariato come costruttore di una nuova fase della civiltà si veda il recente lavoro di Silvio Suppa, *Ordine e conflitto: una trama per rileggere Gramsci*, Giappichelli, Torino 2016.

<sup>18</sup> A. G., *Il movimento torinese dei Consigli di fabbrica*, «L'Ordine Nuovo», I, 73, 14 mar. 1921 (ora in ON, p. 599-611), ma pubblicato in forma diversa («Il movimento comunista di Torino») nelle diverse lingue dell'organo dell'IC («Die Kommunistische Internationale», I, 14, nov. 1920).

esponente di ritorno dalla Russia, evidentemente parte della delegazione italiana, narrava la solidarietà degli operai di “Cronstadt” (*sic*) verso gli operai torinesi e il loro sciopero generale dell’aprile. Non risultava difficile immaginare la sorpresa, se non lo sgomento, che Gramsci attribuiva alla delegazione italiana, per lo più composta da quei vertici del Partito che si erano mostrati freddi, quando non ostili, alla notevole prova rivoluzionaria del proletariato torinese di poche settimane prima.

Ma l’episodio diveniva ancora più significativo se letto in analogia con quanto era accaduto pochi anni prima a una delegazione russa in visita a Torino, inviata in Occidente dal Soviet di Pietrogrado. Nel luglio 1917, i delegati «Smirnof» e «Goldemberg» (*sic*) vennero accolti «da fragorose grida di: Evviva il Compagno Lenin! Evviva i bolscevichi!» Innegabile lo stupore e il disappunto del menscevico Goldemberg di fronte alla notorietà e al consenso del capo del bolscevismo russo, peraltro, in quelle settimane, rifugiato ad Helsinki dopo il fallito rovesciamento del governo Kerenskij in luglio.

Non si può non evidenziare l’intenzionale specularità dei due fatti narrati: laddove, nel 1917, i consigli torinesi avevano inneggiato a Lenin in polemica con la rappresentanza menscevica; tre anni dopo, il proletariato di Kronstadt inneggiava al movimento torinese contro i vertici del socialismo italiano. In entrambi gli episodi il proletariato veniva assunto a coscienza critica della vera rivoluzione, contro gli infingimenti socialdemocratici; un’identità di vedute, quella che oramai accomunava operai comunisti russi e italiani che, secondo Gramsci, oltre a indicare in Torino la “Pietrogrado d’Italia”<sup>19</sup>, consentiva, coerentemente, di individuare i nemici

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<sup>19</sup> Accurate ricostruzioni del ruolo di Torino operaia nel dopoguerra sono condotte in P. Spriano, *Torino operaia nella Grande Guerra 1914-1918*, Torino, Einaudi, 1960; rip. insieme al precedente saggio *Socialismo e classe operaia a Torino dal 1892 al 1913*, Torino, Einaudi, 1958, con il titolo *Storia di Torino operaia e socialista. Da De Amicis a Gramsci*, Torino, Einaudi, 1972; F. Livorsi, *Il socialismo in Piemonte dalla grande guerra all’occupazione delle fabbriche*, in A. Agosti, G.M. Bravo (a cura di), *Storia del movimento operaio, del socialismo e delle lotte sociali in Piemonte*, Bari, De Donato, 1979, IV, pp. 349-416; U. Levra, N. Tranfaglia (a cura di), *Torino fra liberalismo e fascismo*, Milano, Franco Angeli, 1987; E. Mana, *Dalla crisi del dopoguerra alla stabilizzazione del regime*, in N. Tranfaglia (a cura di), *Storia di Torino. VIII. Dalla Grande Guerra alla Liberazione (1915-1945)*, Torino, Einaudi, 1998, pp. 107-178. Il collegamento tra la radicata cultura industriale e la nascita del fenomeno consiliare è ricostruito in E. Soave, *Appunti sulle origini teoriche e pratiche dei consigli di fabbrica a Torino*, «Rivista Storica del Socialismo», VII, 21, gen.-apr. 1964, pp. 1-20. Per l’influenza culturale dell’ambiente torinese sul giovane sardo si veda A. D’Orsi, *Lo studente che non divenne “dottore”. Antonio Gramsci nella facoltà di Lettere*, «Studi storici», XL, 1, gen.-mar. 1999, pp. 39-75, rip., con modifiche, in Id., *Allievi e maestri. L’Università di*

“interni” della rivoluzione proletaria.

La consonanza tra i vertici della III internazionale e la lettura dei fatti torinesi fornita da Gramsci costituì la premessa per quel documento ufficiale, scritto a sei mani dal Presidente (Zinov'ev) e dai membri del Comitato Esecutivo (Bucharin e Lenin), all'indomani della chiusura dei lavori del II Congresso dell'IC (27 agosto 1920). Risultava pienamente accolta l'analisi di Gramsci sul mancato processo rivoluzionario italiano nei mesi appena trascorsi, nonché sulle responsabilità della dirigenza del Partito e del Sindacato, ma soprattutto, e in modo non equivocabile, si sottolineava che solo l'espulsione degli «elementi riformisti o liberali borghesi» avrebbe costituito la premessa per qualsiasi condizione rivoluzionaria. Per evitare qualsiasi indeterminatezza nell'azione «purificatrice» interna, i vertici dell'IC indicavano esplicitamente gli obiettivi nel Partito, Turati, Modigliani, Prampolini e, nel Sindacato, D'Aragona.

L'attenzione, certo non preventivabile, di Lenin alle tesi ordinoviste non può essere compresa se non si valuta il cambio di equilibri nella teoria politica di Gramsci che, testimoni gli interventi sull'«Ordine Nuovo», aveva spostato il fuoco della riflessione dall'istituto consiliare al Partito. Proprio il già citato articolo apparso sulla rivista torinese l'8 maggio 1920 divenne oggetto di specifica attenzione da parte del capo del bolscevismo. In un documento preparatorio per i lavori del II Congresso, Lenin evidenziava come il documento ordinovista fosse stato vanamente indirizzato in vista del Consiglio nazionale di Milano dell'aprile 1920, mentre il II Congresso dell'IC ne trovava «fondamentalmente giuste la critica»<sup>20</sup> verso il PSI «e le proposte pratiche»; tali tesi, in definitiva, corrispondevano «integralmente a tutti i principi fondamentali della III Internazionale».

Fu immediata la eco dell'*endorsement* leniniana nella pagine dell'«Ordine Nuovo», soprattutto se paragonata all'ostilità con cui, invece, il documento era stato accolto dal socialismo italiano. In quei giorni il Partito avrebbe potuto ancora evitare la disfatta del proletariato torinese, ma a nulla erano valsi gli sforzi del gruppo

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*Torino nell'Otto-Novecento*, Torino, CELID, 2002, pp. 149-181.

<sup>20</sup> Tale giudizio era espresso da Lenin nella XVII tesi sui compiti fondamentali del II Congresso, punto 17, ora in Lenin, *Sul movimento operaio italiano*, Edizioni Rinascita, Roma, 1947, pagg. 140-141.

ordinovista «per ottenere che esso si ponesse a capo del movimento»<sup>21</sup>.

Il pubblico riconoscimento delle tesi ordinoviste, nell'ambito del governo internazionale del socialismo, non avrebbe comportato, come noto, un sostanziale cambio di indirizzo nel Partito socialista italiano. Rileva notare come il reciproco riconoscimento tra ordinovisti e bolscevichi non era conseguito a una migliore lettura da parte di Gramsci del pensiero leninista riguardo alle istituzioni rivoluzionarie<sup>22</sup>. Indimostrabile alla prova documentale, tale ipotesi sfocherebbe di molto gli elementi probanti dell'*iter* intellettuale gramsciano: il Nostro aveva maturato in quel tempo la lezione dell'esperienza consiliare, fallita per il mancato supporto del Partito; si impose all'intellettuale-rivoluzionario quella svolta teorica sugli istituti della rivoluzione, concretizzata in un'attenzione crescente verso il Partito nuovo, che avrebbe naturalmente incontrato l'attenzione leninista.

4. Nel marzo del 1921, poche settimane dopo la fondazione del PCd'I, Gramsci ripubblicava con qualche modifica, sull'«Ordine Nuovo» divenuto quotidiano, il testo che proponiamo. Cambiava il destinatario dello scritto, rappresentato oramai dai lettori di uno dei tre organi ufficiali del comunismo italiano, ma soprattutto, nel torno di tempo tra la prima stesura e questa seconda pubblicazione, era completamente cambiato il quadro analitico di riferimento.

Il testo del 1920 può essere letto in maniera prodromica, come altri testi coevi di cui si è voluto dare conto parziale, alla preparazione dentro il Partito di una espulsione a destra. Abbiamo già individuato il contesto storico (teorico e pratico) che aveva indotto Gramsci a seguire questa direzione: il fallimento dello sciopero di aprile, una nuova centralità teorica del Partito, il conforto che arrivava dai vertici del bolscevismo sulla conformità alle direttive della Terza Internazionale.

A questa prospettiva *ex ante*, in cui Gramsci auspicava una trasformazione non più differibile del socialismo italiano, si sostituiva nel marzo del 1921 una prospettiva *ex post*. Attraverso gli

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<sup>21</sup> Non firmato, «L'Ordine Nuovo», 21 agosto 1920, sotto la rubrica *Cronache dell'Ordine Nuovo*.

<sup>22</sup> Per una puntuale e recentissima ricostruzione del rapporto teorico tra Gramsci e Lenin si veda G. Liguori, *Gramsci's Pathways*, Brill, Leiden 2015, pp. 56 *et seq.*

stessi termini d'analisi, il Nostro intendeva ricostruire le condizioni "ambientali" che avevano portato, diversamente da quanto auspicato al tempo della prima stesura, a una scissione a sinistra.

Non è, evidentemente, questa la sede per ripercorrere dal punto di vista gramsciano quei mesi che portarono a una profonda ridefinizione del socialismo italiano, in un contesto sociale già fortemente minato dall'intervento dello squadristo fascista, in un contesto politico che già segnalava la svolta autoritaria di pochi mesi seguente. Una realtà, questa, la cui portata Gramsci aveva valutato immediatamente e con largo anticipo rispetto ad altri esponenti del socialismo<sup>23</sup>. Era oramai chiaro che lo Stato liberale stava per essere profondamente trasformato da «un rincrudimento di barbarie e di reazione»<sup>24</sup>; di fronte a questa eventualità, Gramsci non ritenne più procrastinabile la creazione di un Partito della rivoluzione, l'unico che avesse gli strumenti d'ordine per creare dialetticamente uno Stato alternativo a quello borghese<sup>25</sup>. Nel già citato articolo dell'8 maggio aveva chiaramente affermato:

la fase attuale della lotta di classe in Italia è la fase che precede: o la conquista del potere politico da parte del proletariato rivoluzionario per il passaggio a nuovi modi di produzione e di distribuzione che permettano una ripresa della produttività; o una tremenda reazione da parte della classe proprietaria e della casta governativa<sup>26</sup>.

Il confronto sul Partito (e nel Partito) ampliava, dunque, la propria portata, non investendo solo la mancata rivoluzione passata o l'improbabile rivoluzione futura, ma l'inevitabile reazione che ad esse sarebbe conseguita.

In tale pluralità di elementi di valutazione, la riproposizione del medesimo testo a distanza di poco meno di un anno confermava

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<sup>23</sup> Per la ricostruzione della riflessione gramsciana sulle prime manifestazioni del fascismo rimandiamo a F. Livorsi, *L'«Ordine Nuovo» di Torino e il fascismo: le prime valutazioni di Antonio Gramsci*, in M. Guasco (a cura di), *Le identità regionali. Fascismo e antifascismo in Piemonte* (Atti del colloquio franco-italiano, Alessandria, 8-10 ottobre 1984), Milano, Franco Angeli, 1987, pp. 133-151; per lo sviluppo delle valutazioni gramsciane, si veda S. Colarizi, *Gramsci e il fascismo*, in F. Giasi (a cura di), *Gramsci nel suo tempo*, Roma, Carocci, 2009, II, pp. 339-359.

<sup>24</sup> Non firmato, *La forza dello Stato*, «Avanti!», ed. piemontese, XXIV, 321, 11 dic. 1920, ON, pp. 776-779, alla p. 777.

<sup>25</sup> Per le composite culture che animano il dibattito sulla rivoluzione nei mesi cruciali della scissione, rimandiamo a F. De Felice, *Serrati, Bordiga, Gramsci e il problema della rivoluzione in Italia*, Bari, De Donato, 1972.

<sup>26</sup> *Per un rinnovamento del Partito socialista*, cit., p. 511.

una lettura di cui Gramsci era stato e rimaneva convinto. Ben diverso, però, era il bilancio nella *praxis* che da esso era conseguita. Una riflessione organica sul movimento di fabbrica torinese, all'indomani del suo più significativo e drammatico episodio, era servita ad attivarsi per trasformare dall'interno il socialismo italiano. Sulla base di questa processualità, Gramsci era stato impegnato a costruire quella rete di alleanze tra le correnti del socialismo che ponevano a modello i punti elaborati nel corso del II congresso della IC, considerando dirimente proprio il ventunesimo punto, concernente l'espulsione delle tendenze riformiste.

Ma il 1920 rappresentò il compimento del percorso critico gramsciano non tanto verso il riformismo, le cui pecche, teoriche prima ancora che tattiche, Gramsci aveva già inquadrato con il dibattito sull'intervento nella Grande Guerra. Più complessa dovette essere la definizione di una posizione verso il massimalismo italiano: gli elementi di sviluppo che abbiamo già ricordato (esperienza consiliare, ruolo della IC, nuovo interesse per il Partito) devono essere integrati con questo "filtro ottico" essenziale nella vicenda intellettuale gramsciana del periodo.

La parabola gramsciana nel socialismo italiano può efficacemente spiegarsi tra la lettura che il Nostro fece del congresso di Bologna dell'ottobre 1919 e di quello tenuto a Livorno nel gennaio del 1921.

La mozione Serrati, uscita vincente a Bologna, si era imposta definendo «superato», a seguito della rivoluzione russa, il programma di Genova del 1892. In essa venivano definitivamente condannati gli istituti politici della borghesia; veniva, inoltre, proposta la formazione di «organi nuovi proletari». Quasi naturale per Gramsci, che proprio all'attivazione dei nuovi istituti consiliari si stava dedicando col gruppo torinese, riscontrare favorevolmente l'esito di Bologna, alla luce del Congresso costitutivo della Terza Internazionale<sup>27</sup>.

Per arrivare a Livorno, Gramsci dovette, nell'arco di un anno, "leggere" i Consigli Nazionali di Firenze e di Milano e il II Congresso dell'IC, nonché istruire la costituzione (a Milano, in ottobre) e il primo congresso (a Imola, nel novembre 1920) di quella "frazione comunista" oramai culturalmente e programmaticamente distinta dalla dirigenza massimalista.

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<sup>27</sup> Non firmato, *L'Ordine Nuovo* e *Battaglie Sindacali*, *L'Ordine Nuovo*, I, 29, 6-13 dic. 1919, ON, pp. 348-349, alla p. 349.

Dall'adesione alla linea maggioritaria del Partito espressa dopo il Congresso bolognese, alla critica costruttiva per salvare un Partito «caduto in una crisi di marasma e di letargia»<sup>28</sup>, al fine di salvare la rivoluzione italiana, espressa dopo Firenze, la posizione di Gramsci si sarebbe ulteriormente definita in una frattura sofferta, ma inevitabile, verso un Partito non più «salvabile» (Livorno).

Se è riduttivo interpretare lo sviluppo politico e intellettuale gramsciano come lo scivolamento dal «credersi maggioranza» ad «accettarsi minoranza», risulta evidente quanto, a differenza di altri membri costitutivi del PCd'I, il Nostro reputasse la separazione alla sinistra del Partito, per quanto necessaria, una evidente battuta di ar-resto per il movimento proletario: essa sanzionava la ben più grave minorità che la cultura rivoluzionaria, identificabile nelle tesi della IC, scontava nell'organo politico del proletariato, quel Partito, pro-prio in questi mesi, divenuto centrale nella riflessione gramsciana.

Tra il saggio che proponiamo e la sua ripubblicazione revisionata di qualche mese dopo non cambiò, dunque, lo spettro di analisi, ma le conseguenze teoriche e programmatiche che tale analisi avevano determinato. Quel che rimase in comune fu la testimonianza di un percorso nel socialismo italiano oramai al termine: nel primo caso, Gramsci aveva pensato di proseguire il suo percorso dall'interno, in un *Partito rinnovato* in senso rivoluzionario, non solo per l'evoluzione teorica dei suoi membri, ma per la lezione storica che avevano insegnato le drammatiche esperienze vissute dal proletariato, in primo luogo, torinese; si trovò, invece, a distanza di pochi mesi, a ricominciare dall'esterno, in un *Partito nuovo*, mettendo al centro del suo patrimonio culturale la testimonianza di fatti di vita proletaria, vissuti direttamente<sup>29</sup>.

<sup>28</sup> *Primo: rinnovare il partito*, cit., p. 394.

<sup>29</sup> In questa direzione di ricerca, troverebbe ulteriore spazio una indagine che illumini il Gramsci socialista, dalla sua presumibile iscrizione al socialismo torinese (alla fine del 1913) fino all'epilogo del gennaio 1921. Non sono, peraltro, mancati interventi su altri intervalli di tempo significativi dentro questa fase della biografia gramsciana. Solo per citare i contributi più recenti, ricordiamo il saggio di Giovanna Savant sull'importanza della Grande Guerra, cui l'autrice aggrega anche la coda rivoluzionaria postbellica (*Bordiga, Gramsci e la grande guerra (1914-1920)*, La Città del Sole, Napoli, 2016), e il lavoro di Leonardo Rapone *Cinque anni che paiono secoli. Antonio Gramsci dal socialismo al comunismo (1914-1919)*, Roma, Carocci, 2011; interessante anche la datazione di Angelino per cui il primo biennio dell'«Ordine Nuovo» coincise con un'apertura di Gramsci alla cultura europea del periodo, cfr. C. Angelino, *Gramsci al tempo de «L'Ordine nuovo» (1919-1920): Un intellettuale di vedute europee*, Editori internazionali riuniti, Roma 2014.





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# Il movimento torinese dei Consigli di Fabbrica e Il movimento comunista a Torino

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# Il movimento torinese dei Consigli di Fabbrica e Il movimento comunista a Torino

## **Abstract**

*Il movimento torinese dei Consigli di Fabbrica e Il movimento comunista a Torino*

From the original manuscript, held in the Comintern Archives, we publish for the first time in Italian the text of the article that Gramsci wrote for the November 1920 issue of the Comintern journal “Communist International” on the communist and council movements in Turin. For comparison purposes, we include in a parallel column the article as it was then published a few months later in “L’Ordine nuovo”, with modifications (presumably by Gramsci) made in this latter version, retranslated into Italian from the published German translation. Gramsci deals with the situation in Turin and the great strikes there during the First World War, the alliances formed between the working class and other social strata, and State repression of the workers’ armed insurrections. In the midst of these events, in May 1917, there was the first mass demonstration since Italy’s entry into the war, addressed by I. P. Goldenberg and A. N. Smirnov, delegates to the West of the Petrograd Soviet, and then both Menševiks. They were however greeted with cries in favour of Lenin and the Bolševiks, whose strategy in Petrograd was later – and independently – duplicated in Turin, with factory councils being formed on the initiative of the majority communist group in the Turin Socialist Party branch. The article closes with a criticism of the role of the reformist leadership of the Socialist Party and Unions, who ignored the role of the councils as the equivalent of “soviets”, the nuclei of a future democratic State.

## **Keywords**

Torino; Scioperi, 1917, Consigli di fabbrica, Movimento comunista

*Il movimento torinese dei Consigli di Fabbrica e Il movimento comunista a Torino*

Prima pagina dell'«Avanti!» del 15 agosto 1917, con l'articolo *Il compito della rivoluzione russa*, da attribuire a Gramsci, nel quale egli commenta i discorsi a Torino dei delegati del Soviet di Pietrogrado. (Fonte: Archivio Nevol Querci e Fondazione Istituto Gramsci)



Front page of *Avanti!*, 15 August 1917, with the article *The Task of the Russian Revolution*, attributed to Gramsci, commenting on the speeches in Turin of the delegates from the Petrograd Soviet.

*Il movimento torinese  
dei Consigli di  
fabbrica*

*(Rapporto inviato nel  
luglio 1920 al Comitato  
Esecutivo  
dell'Internazionale  
Comunista)*

Il n. 14 dell'«Internazionale Comunista» contiene questa relazione sul movimento operaio torinese, inviata dal compagno Gramsci, nel luglio 1920 all'Esecutivo della Internazionale. La riproduciamo, ritraducendola dalla traduzione tedesca, perchè i compagni abbiano un documento obbiettivo delle informazioni — che dall'Italia erano inviate in Russia e che servirono indubbiamente a orientare il C. E. sulla situazione italiana che doveva risolversi a Livorno.

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Uno dei membri della delegazione italiana, testé ritornato dalla Russia sovietista, riferì ai lavoratori torinesi che la tribuna destinata per l'accoglienza della delegazione a Kronstadt era fregiata colla seguente iscrizione: «Evviva lo sciopero generale torinese dell'aprile 1920».

Gli operai appresero questa notizia con molto piacere e grande soddisfazione. La maggior parte dei componenti la de-

*Il movimento  
comunista di Torino*

Antonio Gramsci

Un membro della delegazione italiana ritornato recentemente dalla Russia dei Soviet ha comunicato alla classe operaia torinese che a Cronstadt la tribuna preparata per accogliere la delegazione era addobbata da una fascia recante questa dicitura: Evviva lo sciopero generale di Torino dell'aprile 1920!

La notizia è stata accolta con molta gioia e molta soddisfazione dagli operai. I maggiori esponenti della dele-

legazione italiana recatasi in Russia erano stati contrari allo sciopero generale dell'aprile. Essi sostenevano nei loro articoli contro lo sciopero che gli operai torinesi erano stati le vittime d'un'illusione ed avevano sopravvalutato l'importanza dello sciopero.

I lavoratori torinesi appresero perciò con piacere l'atto di simpatia dei compagni di Kronstadt ed essi si dissero: «I nostri compagni comunisti russi hanno meglio compreso e valutato l'importanza dello sciopero di aprile che non gli opportunisti italiani, dando così a questi ultimi una buona lezione».

*Lo sciopero di aprile.*

Il movimento torinese dell'aprile fu infatti un grandioso avvenimento nella storia non soltanto del proletariato italiano, ma di quello europeo, e possiamo dirlo, nella storia del proletariato di tutto il mondo.

Per la prima volta nella storia, si verificò infatti il caso di un proletariato che impegna la lotta per il controllo sulla produzione, senza essere stato spinto all'azione dalla fame o dalla disoccupazione. Di più, non fu soltanto una minoranza, una avanguardia della classe operaia che intraprese la lotta, ma la massa intera dei lavoratori di Torino scese in campo e portò la lotta, incurante di privazioni e di sacrifici, fino alla fine.

gazione recatasi in Russia ~~erano~~ sono stati molto ostili allo sciopero generale dell'aprile: essi hanno schernito gli sforzi eroici fatti allora dagli operai torinesi, essi hanno scritto che gli operai torinesi in quello sciopero non avevano una precisa coscienza politica, ma seguivano soltanto una «fallace illusione». Gli operai torinesi hanno accolto con molta gioia e molta soddisfazione la notizia di ciò che era avvenuto a Cronstadt perché hanno detto: — I compagni comunisti russi hanno compreso e hanno giudicato il movimento dell'aprile meglio degli opportunisti italiani: i compagni comunisti russi hanno così dato agli opportunisti italiani una lezione di storia che essi avevano ben meritato.

Il movimento torinese dell'aprile è stato effettivamente un grandioso avvenimento storico, non solo nella storia della classe operaia italiana ma anche nella storia del proletariato europeo e mondiale. Per la prima volta si è visto un proletariato entrare in lotta per il controllo sulla produzione senza essere costretto all a questa lotta dalla disoccupazione e dalla fame: e non si trattò solo di una minoranza d'avanguardia della classe operaia locale; tutta la massa lavoratrice torinese entrò compatta nella lotta e la sostenne energicamente, senza defezioni, sottoponendosi alle

I metallurgici scioperarono un mese, le altre categorie dieci giorni.

Lo sciopero generale degli ultimi dieci giorni dilagò in tutto il Piemonte, mobilitando circa mezzo milione di operai industriali e agricoli, e coinvolse quindi circa quattro milioni di popolazione.

I capitalisti italiani tesero tutte le loro forze per soffocare il movimento operaio torinese; tutti i mezzi dello Stato borghese furono posti a loro disposizione, mentre gli operai sostennero da soli la lotta senza alcun aiuto nè dalla Direzione del Partito Socialista, nè dalla Confederazione Generale del lavoro. Anzi, i dirigenti del Partito e della Confederazione schernirono i lavoratori torinesi e fecero tutto il possibile per trattenere i lavoratori e contadini italiani da qualsiasi azione rivoluzionaria colla quale essi intendevano manifestare la loro solidarietà coi fratelli torinesi, e portare a essi un efficace aiuto.

Ma gli operai torinesi non si perdettero d'animo. Essi sopportarono tutto il peso della reazione capitalista, osservarono la disciplina fino all'ultimo momento e rimasero perfino dopo la disfatta fedeli alla bandiera del comunismo e della rivoluzione mondiale.

#### *Anarchici e sindacalisti*

La propaganda degli anarchici e dei sindacalisti contro la

più dure privazioni e ai sacrifici più grandi. Lo sciopero durò un mese per gli operai metallurgici, durò dieci giorni per tutta la massa lavoratrice: ~~come~~ lo sciopero generale di dieci giorni abbracciò tutta la regione piemontese, e cioè circa mezzo milione di operai industriali e di contadini, corrispondenti a quasi quattro milioni di abitanti. Tutta la classe capitalista italiana era impegnata per schiacciare la classe operaia torinese: tutte le forze dello Stato borghese erano state messe a disposizione dei capitalisti: da parte loro gli operai erano soli, senza l'appoggio delle centrali del Partito socialista e della Confederazione dei Sindacati, anzi gli operai erano scherniti e diffamati dai capi dei Sindacati e del Partito, che fecero di tutto per soffocare i movimenti di solidarietà che le masse operaie e contadine di tutta l'Italia volevano iniziare (e in qualche località iniziarono effettivamente) per dare aiuto ai fratelli torinesi. Tuttavia gli operai non si perdettero d'animo: essi sostennero sulle spalle tutto il peso della reazione capitalista, e anche dopo la sconfitta non cessarono di rimanere disciplinati intorno alla bandiera del Comunismo e della Rivoluzione mondiale: la propaganda degli anarchici e dei sindacalisti contro la disciplina al Partito politico della classe lavoratrice e



disciplina di partito e la dittatura del proletariato non ebbe alcuna influenza sulle masse, anche quando, causa il tradimento dei dirigenti, lo sciopero terminò con una sconfitta. I lavoratori torinesi giurarono anzi di intensificare la lotta rivoluzionaria e di condurla su due fronti: da una parte contro la borghesia vittoriosa, dall'altra contro i capi traditori.

La coscienza e disciplina rivoluzionaria, di cui le masse torinesi hanno dato prova, hanno la loro base storica nelle condizioni economiche e politiche in cui si è sviluppata la lotta di classe a Torino.

Torino è un centro di carattere prettamente industriale. Quasi tre quarti della popolazione, che conta mezzo milione di abitanti, è composta di operai: gli elementi piccolo-borghesi sono una quantità infima. A Torino vi è inoltre una massa compatta di impiegati e tecnici, che sono organizzati nei Sindacati e aderiscono alla Camera del Lavoro. Essi furono durante tutti i grandi scioperi a fianco degli operai, ed hanno quindi, se non tutti, almeno la maggior parte, acquistato la psicologia del vero proletario, in lotta contro il capitale, per la rivoluzione ed il comunismo.

#### *La produzione industriale*

La produzione torinese è, vista dal di fuori, perfetta-

contro la dittatura del proletariato non ebbe successo nemmeno dopo che il tradimento dei capi aveva condotto alla sconfitta: gli operai torinesi hanno solo giurato a se stessi di intensificare la lotta rivoluzionaria su due fronti, contro la borghesia sfruttatrice e contro i capi opportunisti e traditori.

X X X

Questa forza di coscienza e di disciplina rivoluzionaria nelle masse proletarie di Torino trova una spiegazione storica nelle condizioni economiche e politiche in cui si svolge la lotta di classe. Torino è una città ~~in dove è~~ dedicata quasi esclusivamente alla produzione industriale. La sua popolazione, di 500.000 abitanti, è ~~così costituita di 350.000 oper~~ per tre quarti popolazione operaia. Non esiste che in minima parte una ~~b~~ piccola borghesia: ~~gli intellet~~ oltre la popolazione operaia esistono grandi masse di impiegati e di tecnici, ma essi lavorano nelle **grandi** fabbriche, sono organizzati in grandi Sindacati aderenti alla Camera del Lavoro, hanno fatto dei grandi scioperi insieme agli operai e hanno, nella loro maggioranza, acquistato la psicologia del proletario, la psicologia di chi lotta contro il capitale per la Rivoluzione e per il Comunismo. L'apparecchio di produzione

mente centralizzata e omogenea. L'industria metallurgica con circa 50.000 operai e 10.000 impiegati e tecnici occupa il primo posto. Nelle officine «FIAT» soltanto lavorano 35.000 operai, impiegati e tecnici; nelle officine principali di questa azienda sono impiegati 16.000 operai che costruiscono automobili di ogni genere coi sistemi più moderni e perfezionati.

La produzione di automobili è la caratteristica dell'industria metallurgica torinese. La maggior parte delle maestranze è formata da operai qualificati e tecnici, che non hanno però la mentalità piccolo-borghese degli operai qualificati di altri paesi, ad esempio dell'Inghilterra.

La produzione automobilistica che occupa il primo posto nella industria metallurgica, ha subordinato a sé altri rami della produzione, come l'industria del legno e quella della gomma.

I metallurgici formano l'avanguardia del proletariato torinese. Date le particolarità di questa industria, ogni movimento dei suoi operai diventa un movimento generale di masse e assume un carattere politico e rivoluzionario, anche se al principio esso non persegua che obiettivi sindacali.

Torino possiede una sola organizzazione sindacale importante, forte di 90.000 iscritti – la Camera del Lavoro. I

torinese è fortemente accentrato e unificato. L'industria metallurgica, con 50.000 operai e 10.000 tra impiegati e tecnici, domina tutto il campo industriale: nell'industria metallurgica una sola ditta (la Fiat) occupa 35.000 operai, impiegati e tecnici, e la fabbrica centrale della Fiat conta 16.000 lavoratori, accentrati ~~al-mas~~ intorno agli automatismi più perfetti della produzione moderna. La produzione metallurgica torinese è dedicata tutta all'automobile: la maggioranza degli operai è di qualificati e di specialisti, ma essi non partecipano per nulla della psicologia piccolo borghese degli operai qualificati di Inghilterra, per esempio. L'automobile domina la produzione metallurgica e domina alcune altre grandi industrie: quella del legno e quella della gomma. Gli operai metallurgici sono l'avanguardia del proletariato torinese: per questa conformazione unificata dell'apparecchio industriale, ogni movimento diventa [automaticamente](#) movimento di massa, e il carattere suo, se anche inizialmente era corporativo, rapidamente diventa politico e rivoluzionario.

Esiste a Torino una sola grande organizzazione sindacale, con 90.000 iscritti: la Camera del Lavoro. Gli anarchici e i sindacalisti rappresentano solo dei piccolissimi gruppi, senza nessun



gruppi anarchici e sindacalisti esistenti non hanno quasi nessuna influenza sulla massa operaia, che si pone ferma e decisa dalla parte della Sezione del Partito Socialista, composta, nella maggior parte, di operai comunisti.

Il movimento comunista dispone delle seguenti organizzazioni di battaglia: la Sezione del Partito, con 1500 iscritti, 28 circoli con 10.000 soci e 23 organizzazioni giovanili con 2000 soci.

In ogni azienda esiste un gruppo comunista permanente con un proprio ente direttivo. I singoli gruppi si uniscono a seconda della posizione topografica della loro azienda in gruppi regionali, i quali fanno capo a un comitato direttivo in seno alla Sezione del Partito, che concentra nelle sue mani tutto il movimento comunista della città e la direzione della massa operaia.

#### *Torino Capitale d'Italia*

Prima della rivoluzione borghese, che creò l'attuale ordinamento borghese in Italia, Torino era la capitale di un piccolo Stato, che comprendeva il Piemonte, la Liguria e la Sardegna. In quell'epoca predominava a Torino la piccola industria e il commercio.

Dopo l'unificazione del regno d'Italia e il trasporto della capitale a Roma, sembrava che Torino dovesse

influsso sulla massa: la massa è guidata solo dalla Sezione del Partito Socialista, composta in prevalenza ~~di~~ assoluta di operai comunisti. Il movimento comunista organizzato dispone di questi organismi di lotta: la Sezione del Partito, costituita di circa 1.500 soci; 28 circoli regionali con circa 10.000 soci; 28 Fasci della gioventù socialista con circa 4.000 soci<sup>1</sup>. Esiste in ogni fabbrica un gruppo comunista costituito permanentemente, con un proprio ufficio direttivo: i gruppi si accentrano per quartiere nei Circoli e finalmente si accentrano tutti nella Sezione del Partito e nel Comitato direttivo della Sezione che ha in mano tutto il movimento comunista organizzato della città e controlla tutta la massa lavoratrice.

Torino, prima della rivoluzione borghese che portò alla formazione dello Stato borghese italiano unitario, era la capitale del piccolo Stato semifeudale del Piemonte, della Liguria e della Sardegna; allora prevaleva a Torino la piccola industria, l'artigianato e l'attività commerciale. Costituitosi il regno unito italiano la capitale fu trasportata a Roma

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<sup>1</sup> Il manoscritto e la sua copia dattiloscritta, corretta a mano da Gramsci, riportano la cifra di 4.000; le versioni in francese, russo e tedesco – quest'ultima usata per l'articolo dell'*Ordine Nuovo* – danno la cifra di 2.000 giovani socialisti.

correre pericolo di perdere la sua importanza. Ma la città sorpassò in breve tempo la crisi economica, e divenne uno dei centri industriali più importanti d'Italia. Si può dire che l'Italia ha tre capitali: Roma, come centro amministrativo dello Stato borghese, Milano come centro commerciale e finanziario del paese (tutte le banche, gli uffici commerciali e gli istituti finanziari sono concentrati a Milano), ed infine Torino come centro industriale, dove la produzione industriale ha raggiunto il massimo grado di sviluppo. Col trasferimento della capitale a Roma, da Torino emigrò tutta la piccola e media borghesia intellettuale che fornì al nuovo Stato borghese il personale amministrativo necessario per il suo funzionamento: lo sviluppo della grande industria attirò invece a Torino il fior fiore della classe operaia italiana. Il processo di sviluppo di questa città è, dal punto di vista della storia italiana e della rivoluzione proletaria italiana, interessantissimo.

Il proletariato torinese divenne così il dirigente spirituale delle masse operaie italiane che sono vincolate a questa città da molteplici legami: parentela, tradizione, storia e da legami spirituali (l'ideale per ogni operaio italiano è di poter lavorare a Torino).

e sembrò che Torino dovesse decadere; invece essa rapidamente ~~sepp~~ superò la crisi economica, e in cinquanta anni raddoppiò la popolazione, diventando la più grande città industriale italiana. Si può dire che l'Italia ha tre capitali: una politica, Roma, dove si raccolgono tutti i fili dell'amministrazione statale borghese, una finanziaria e commerciale, Milano, dove ~~si accente~~ hanno sede i più grandi istituti bancari italiani, e una industriale Torino, dove ~~hanno~~ ha trovato il suo massimo sviluppo il sistema di fabbrica.

~~Poiché~~ Il trasporto della capitale ha allontanato da Torino la piccola e la media borghesia intellettuale, che ha dato il personale all'apparecchio del nuovo Stato borghese: il sorgere e lo svilupparsi della grande industria ha invece condotto a Torino il fior fiore di tutta la classe operaia italiana. ~~Così è avvenuto che storicamente Torino rappresenta un~~ Il processo di formazione della città è dei più interessanti dal punto di vista della storia italiana e della Rivoluzione proletaria italiana. Il proletariato torinese si è venuto così a trovare a capo di un apparecchio di governo «spirituale» delle masse lavoratrici italiane, che sono legate a Torino per tanti vincoli, familiari, di tradizione storica, di ~~immigrazione~~ desiderio (ogni operaio italiano desidera andare a lavorare a Torino). Que-

Tutto ciò spiega il perché le masse operaie di tutta l'Italia erano desiderose, andando perfino contro la volontà dei capi, di manifestare la loro solidarietà collo sciopero generale di Torino; esse vedono in questa città il centro, la capitale della rivoluzione comunista, la Pietrogrado della rivoluzione proletaria italiana.

*Due insurrezioni armate*

Durante la guerra imperialista del 1914-1918, Torino vide due insurrezioni armate: la prima insurrezione, che scoppiò nel maggio 1915, aveva l'obiettivo di impedire l'intervento dell'Italia nella guerra contro la Germania (in questa occasione venne saccheggiata la Casa del Popolo); la seconda insurrezione, nell'agosto del 1917, ed assunse il carattere di una lotta rivoluzionaria armata su grande scala.

La notizia della Rivoluzione di marzo in Russia era stata accolta a Torino con gioia indescrivibile. Gli operai piangevano dalla commozione quando appresero la notizia che il potere dello Zar era stato rovesciato dai lavoratori di Pietrogrado. Ma i lavoratori torinesi non si lasciarono ingannare dalla fraseologia demagogica di Kerenski e dei menscevichi. Quando nel luglio 1917 arrivò a Torino la missione inviata nella Europa

sto spiega come sia spesso avvenuto che le masse di tutta Italia anche contro la volontà dei capi, abbiano voluto dare la loro solidarietà allo sciopero generale: esse vedevano in Torino la capitale della Rivoluzione comunista, esse vedevano in Torino la Pietrogrado della Rivoluzione proletaria italiana.

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Nel periodo della guerra imperialista 1914-1918, si verificarono a Torino due insurrezioni armate. La prima nel maggio 1915 per opporsi all'entrata dell'Italia nella guerra: in questa occasione la Casa del Popolo fu saccheggiata completamente dalla polizia. La seconda insurrezione avvenne nell'agosto del 1917 e assunse una forma acuta di lotta armata rivoluzionaria. La Rivoluzione russa del marzo era stata accolta con una gioia immensa a Torino: gli operai piangevano per la commozione, al sapere che il governo dello zar era stato rovesciato dall'insurrezione degli operai di Pietrogrado. Ma gli operai torinesi non si lasciarono ingannare, anche da lontano, dalla fraseologia demagogica di Kerensky e dei menscevichi. Quando nel luglio 1917 venne a Torino la missione ~~de~~ inviata in Occidente dal Soviet di Pietro-

occidentale dal Soviet di Pietrogrado, i delegati Smirnoff e Goldenberg, che si presentarono dinanzi a una folla di 50.000 operai, vennero accolti da grida assordanti di «Evviva Lenin! Evviva i bolscevichi!».

Goldenberg non era troppo soddisfatto di questa accoglienza: egli non riusciva a capire in che maniera il compagno Lenin si fosse acquistata tanta popolarità fra gli operai torinesi. E non bisogna dimenticare che questo episodio avvenne dopo la repressione della rivolta bolscevica del luglio, che la stampa borghese italiana infuriava contro Lenin e contro i bolscevichi, denunziandoli come briganti, intriganti, agenti e spie dell'imperialismo tedesco.

Dal principio della guerra italiana (24 maggio 1915) il proletariato torinese non aveva fatto nessuna manifestazione di masse.

#### *Barricate, trincee, reticolati*

L'imponente comizio che era stato organizzato in onore dei delegati del Soviet petrogradese segnò l'inizio di un nuovo periodo di movimenti di masse. Non passò un mese, che i lavoratori torinesi insorsero con le armi in pugno, contro l'imperialismo e il militarismo italiano. L'insurrezione scoppiò il 23 agosto 1917. Per cinque giorni gli operai combatterono nelle vie della città. Gli insorti, che

grado, i delegati Smirnoff e Goldenberg, che parlarono a una moltitudine di oltre 50.000 operai, furono accolti da fragorose grida di: Evviva il Compagno Lenin! Evviva i bolscevichi! Il ~~menscevico~~ *«Novaia Gisa»* Goldenberg non fu molto soddisfatto di questa accoglienza del proletariato torinese: egli non riusciva a spiegarsi come il compagno Lenin godesse tanta popolarità in mezzo agli operai torinesi. E bisogna pensare che era già stata schiacciata l'insurrezione di luglio a Pietrogrado e i giornali borghesi italiani scrivevano furiosi articoli contro Lenin e contro i bolscevichi, chiamandoli banditi, avventurieri, agenti e spie dell'imperialismo tedesco!

Dall'inizio della guerra italiana (24 maggio 1915) il proletariato torinese non aveva potuto fino a quel giorno tenere nessuna dimostrazione di massa. Il comizio grandioso in onore del Soviet dei deputati operai di Pietrogrado iniziò un nuovo periodo nell'azione di massa.

#### ~~Neppure un mes~~

Non era passato un mese e gli operai di Torino insorgevano con le armi in pugno contro il militarismo e l'imperialismo italiano. L'azione di massa ebbe inizio il 23 agosto 1917. Per cinque giorni gli operai si batterono nelle vie e nelle piazze. Alcuni quartieri caddero completamente in

disponevano di fucili, granate e mitragliatrici, riuscirono persino a occupare alcuni quartieri della città, e tentarono tre o quattro volte di impadronirsi del centro ove si trovavano le istituzioni governative e i comandi militari. Ma i due anni di guerra e di reazione avevano indebolito la già forte organizzazione del proletariato, e gli operai inferiori di armamento furono vinti. Invano sperarono in un appoggio da parte dei soldati; questi si lasciarono ingannare dall'insinuazione che la rivolta era stata inscenata dai tedeschi.

Il popolo eresse delle barricate, scavò trincee, circondò qualche rione di reticolati a corrente elettrica e respinse per 5 giorni tutti gli attacchi delle truppe e della polizia. Caddero più di 500 operai, più di 2000 vennero gravemente feriti. Dopo la sconfitta i migliori elementi furono arrestati e allontanati ed il movimento proletario perdette di intensità rivoluzionaria. Ma i sentimenti comunisti del proletariato torinese non erano spenti.

Una prova se ne può trovare nel seguente episodio: poco tempo dopo l'insurrezione di agosto ebbero luogo le elezioni per il Consiglio amministrativo dell'Alleanza Cooperativa torinese, una immensa organizzazione che provvede all'approvvigionamento della quarta parte della popolazione torinese.

mano agli insorti che avevano fucili, granate e qualche mitragliatrice. Per tre o quattro volte masse di operai armati tentarono di conquistare il centro della città, dove ~~erano~~ sono posti gli edifici pubblici e le sedi dei comandi militari: ma nei due anni di guerra l'organizzazione rivoluzionaria degli operai era stata disarticolata dalla reazione, gli operai non avevano un centro di coordinazione militare e furono<sup>2</sup> schiacciati dai soldati, ai quali fu fatto credere che l'insurrezione era stata ordita dai tedeschi. Gli operai, che avevano costruite barricate perfette, trincee, che avevano teso intorno ai loro quartieri fili di ferro attraversati dalla corrente elettrica, resistettero per cinque giorni agli assalti della truppa e della polizia. Più di 500 operai furono uccisi nella repressione, più di 2000 furono gravemente feriti. Dopo questa strage i migliori elementi della classe operaia furono o arrestati, o allontanati da Torino. Il movimento perdette di intensità rivoluzionaria, ma non perciò si attenuò lo spirito di disciplina comunista della massa. Un episodio serve a dipingere bene questa forza della coscienza socialista. Subito dopo l'insurrezione di agosto furono rifatte le elezioni per il Consi-

<sup>2</sup> Per distrazione, nel manoscritto Gramsci scrive la parola inesistente «furato», poi corretta a mano nel dattiloscritto a «furono».



### *L'Alleanza Cooperativa*

L'A.C.T. è composta della Cooperativa ferrovieri e dell'Associazione Generale degli Operai.

Da molti anni la Sezione Socialista aveva conquistato il Consiglio di Amministrazione, ma ora la Sezione non era più in grado di esplicare un'attiva agitazione in mezzo alle masse operaie.

Il capitale dell'Alleanza era per la maggior parte costituito di azioni della Cooperativa ferroviaria appartenenti ai ferrovieri e alle loro famiglie. Lo sviluppo preso dall'Alleanza aveva aumentato il valore delle azioni da 50 a 700 lire. Il Partito riuscì però a persuadere gli azionisti che una cooperativa operaia ha per scopo non il profitto dei singoli ma il rafforzamento dei mezzi di lotta rivoluzionaria, e gli azionisti si accontentarono di un dividendo del 3 1/2 per cento sul valore nominale di 50 lire, anziché sul valore reale di 700 lire. Dopo l'insurrezione dell'agosto si formò, coll'appoggio della polizia e della stampa borghese e riformista, un Comitato di ferrovieri che si propose di strappare al partito socialista il predominio nel Consiglio amministrativo. Agli azionisti si promise la liquidazione immediata della differenza di 650 lire fra il valore nominale e quello corrente di ogni azione: ai ferrovieri si promisero diverse prerogative

glio d'amministrazione dell'Alleanza Cooperativa, una grande istituzione operaia che approvvigiona un quarto della popolazione torinese. L'Alleanza è costituita dall'unione della Cooperativa ferroviaria e della Associazione Generale degli operai (una grande società di mutuo soccorso). Il Consiglio d'amministrazione era stato da molti anni conquistato dalla Sezione del Partito Socialista, ma in quel momento la Sezione doveva svolgere un'azione molto limitata, clandestina, non poteva giungere fino alle grandi masse. I capitali dell'Alleanza erano costituiti in ~~grand~~ <sup>grande</sup> maggioranza da azioni dei ferrovieri, e molte di queste azioni erano possedute dagli impiegati ferroviari e dalle loro famiglie. Lo sviluppo dell'Alleanza aveva portato il valore effettivo di ogni azione dalle 50 lire iniziali a 700 lire, ma il Partito era riuscito a persuadere gli azionisti che la Cooperazione operaia non deve servire per il lucro personale, ma per dare mezzi per la lotta rivoluzionaria: perciò gli azionisti si accontentavano di prendere un interesse del 3.50 per cento sul valore nominale di 50 lire e non sul valore reale di 700 lire. Dopo l'insurrezione d'agosto, con l'aiuto della polizia e dei giornali borghesi, si formò un Comitato di ferrovieri riformisti per strappare la maggioranza del Consiglio ai socialisti. Fu promesso agli azionisti che

nella distribuzione dei generi alimentari. I riformisti traditori e la stampa borghese misero in azione tutti i mezzi di propaganda e di agitazione per trasformare la Cooperativa da un'organizzazione operaia in una azienda commerciale di carattere piccolo-borghese. La classe operaia era esposta a persecuzioni di ogni genere. La censura soffocò la voce della Sezione Socialista. Ma ad onta di tutte le persecuzioni e tutte le angherie, i socialisti, che non avevano per un solo istante abbandonato il loro punto di vista, che la cooperativa operaia è un mezzo della lotta di classe, ottennero di nuovo la maggioranza dell'Alleanza Cooperativa.

Il Partito Socialista ottenne 700 voti su 800, quantunque la maggioranza degli elettori fossero impiegati ferroviari, dai quali ci si aspettava che dopo la sconfitta dell'insurrezione dell'agosto avrebbero manifestato una certa titubanza e perfino delle tendenze reazionarie.

#### *Nel dopo guerra*

Dopo la fine della guerra imperialista il movimento proletario fece rapidi progressi. La massa operaia di Torino comprese che il periodo storico aperto dalla guerra era profondamente diverso dall'epoca precedente alla guerra. La classe operaia torinese intuì subito che la III Internazionale è un'organizzazione del proleta-

la differenza tra il valore reale e il valore nominale di ogni azione (650 lire) sarebbe stata loro immediatamente versata; fu promesso che la Cooperativa avrebbe nella distribuzione delle merci preferito gli azionisti. Tutta la propaganda possibile fu svolta dai traditori riformisti e dai giornali borghesi per trasformare la Cooperativa da istituzione operaia in istituzione commerciale piccolo borghese. La classe operaia era perseguitata, la voce della Sezione socialista era soffocata dalla censura, si soffriva molto per la mancanza di viveri: ma la maggioranza della Cooperativa fu riconquistata dai rivoluzionari che non avevano piegato di un pollice nel loro programma di cooperazione operaia per dare mezzi alla lotta di classe: nella Cooperativa ferroviaria, quantunque dei votanti ~~fossero~~ molti ~~im~~ fossero impiegati e si potesse supporre in loro un passo indietro dopo l'insurrezione **armata** proletaria, la lista del Partito ebbe 700 voti su 800 votanti.

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Dopo l'armistizio della guerra imperialista, l'azione del proletariato riprese con grande vigore ed energia. Il proletariato torinese comprendeva però chiaramente che il periodo storico aperto dalla guerra imperialista è fondamentalmente diverso da quello precedente alla

riato mondiale per la direzione della guerra civile, per la conquista del potere politico, per l'istituzione della dittatura proletaria, per la creazione di un nuovo ordine nei rapporti economici e sociali.

I problemi della rivoluzione, economici e politici, formavano oggetto di discussione in tutte le assemblee degli operai. Le migliori forze dell'avanguardia operaia si riunirono per diffondere un settimanale di indirizzo comunista, l'*Ordine Nuovo*. Nelle colonne di questo settimanale si trattarono i vari problemi della rivoluzione: l'organizzazione rivoluzionaria delle masse che dovevano conquistare i Sindacati alla causa del Comunismo; il trasferimento della lotta<sup>1</sup> sindacale dal campo grettamente corporativista e riformista, sul terreno della lotta rivoluzionaria per il controllo sulla produzione e la dittatura del proletariato. Anche la questione dei Consigli di fabbrica fu posta all'ordine del giorno.

Nelle aziende torinesi esistevano già prima piccoli comitati operai, riconosciuti dai capitalisti, e alcuni di essi avevano già ingaggiato la lotta contro il funzionarismo, lo spirito riformista e le tendenze costituzionali dei Sindacati.

Ma la maggior parte di questi comitati non erano che

guerra, che la Terza Internazionale è l'organizzazione ~~p~~ del proletariato mondiale per la guerra civile, per la conquista del potere politico, per la dittatura proletaria, per la fondazione di un ordine nuovo nei rapporti di produzione e nei rapporti sociali che ne dipendono. Grandi discussioni avvenivano nelle assemblee operaie sui problemi della Rivoluzione, sui problemi economici e su quelli politici. Le energie operaie d'avanguardia comunista si organizzarono intorno a un settimanale di cultura comunista: l'*Ordine nuovo*. Le polemiche che si svolsero in questo settimanale miravano a questo fine: creare una organizzazione rivoluzionaria delle masse per conquistare al comunismo i Sindacati operai e portare la lotta industriale dal terreno delle contese per i miglioramenti nei salari e negli orari nel terreno della lotta rivoluzionaria per il controllo della produzione e ~~della~~ per la dittatura proletaria. La parola d'ordine fu quella dei Consigli di fabbrica.

Esistevano nelle fabbriche torinesi dei piccoli Comitati operai, riconosciuti dai capitalisti, ma qualcuno dei quali aveva già iniziato la lotta contro la burocrazia sindacale e lo spirito legalitario e riformista dei funzionari sindacali. La maggior parte di questi<sup>4</sup> Comitati però era emanazione degli uffi-

<sup>1</sup> Per un errore tipografico, *L'Ordine Nuovo* porta «lotta» invece di «dotta»

<sup>3</sup> Nel manoscritto «questo».



creature dei sindacati; le liste dei candidati per questi Comitati (Commissioni interne) venivano proposte dalle organizzazioni sindacali, le quali sceglievano di preferenza operai di tendenze opportunistiche che non avrebbero dato delle noie ai padroni, e avrebbero soffocato in germe ogni azione di massa. I seguaci dell'*Ordine Nuovo* perorarono nella loro propaganda in prima linea la trasformazione delle Commissioni interne, ed il principio che la formazione delle liste dei candidati dovesse avvenire nel seno della massa operaia e non dalle cime della burocrazia sindacale. I compiti che essi assegnarono ai Consigli di fabbrica furono il controllo sulla produzione, l'armamento e la preparazione militare delle masse, la loro preparazione politica e tecnica. Essi non dovevano più compiere nè l'antica funzione di cani di guardia che proteggono gli interessi delle classi dominanti, nè frenare le masse nelle loro azioni contro il regime capitalistico.

#### *L'entusiasmo per i Consigli*

La propaganda per i Consigli di fabbrica venne accolta con entusiasmo dalle masse; nel corso di mezzo anno vennero costituiti Consigli di fabbrica in tutte le fabbriche ed officine metallurgiche, i comunisti conquistarono la maggioranza nel sindacato metallurgico; il principio dei Consigli

ci sindacali, i loro membri erano proposti alle assemblee di fabbrica dagli uffici sindacali ed erano scelti tra gli operai opportunisti **più** specializzati, in modo che essi non davano mai «noie» ai capitalisti e soffocavano in germe ogni movimento delle masse. La propaganda svolta dagli operai che aderivano alla predicazione dell'*Ordine Nuovo* si basò sulla trasformazione di questi Comitati, che dovevano diventare emanazione **diretta** delle masse e non più della burocrazia sindacale, dovevano occuparsi della lotta per il controllo sulla produzione, della preparazione militare della massa, dell'attività di educazione economica e politica delle masse e non più [parola illegibile poi cancellata - N.d.C.] dovevano occuparsi di fare i cani da guardia per soffocare le insurrezioni della massa contro la disciplina capitalistica delle fabbriche.

La propaganda per i Consigli di fabbrica fu accolta con immenso entusiasmo dalle masse: nello spazio di sei mesi in tutte le fabbriche metallurgiche erano sorti i Consigli operai, i comunisti avevano conquistato il ~~local~~ Consiglio del Sindacato metallurgico e ~~la~~ **maggiora** l'idea dei Consigli di fabbrica e della lotta per il controllo della produzione aveva conquistato la maggioranza del Congresso ~~della~~ e dei Sindacati professionali aderenti alla Camera del lavoro.

di fabbrica e del controllo sulla produzione venne approvato e accettato dalla maggioranza del Congresso e dalla maggior parte dei Sindacati appartenenti alla Camera del Lavoro.

L'organizzazione dei Consigli di fabbrica si basa sui seguenti principi: in ogni fabbrica, in ogni officina viene costituito un organismo sulla base della rappresentanza (e non sull'antica base del sistema burocratico) il quale realizza la forza del proletariato, lotta contro l'ordine capitalistico ed<sup>2</sup> esercita il controllo sulla produzione, educando tutta la massa operaia per la lotta rivoluzionaria e per la creazione dello Stato operaio. Il Consiglio di fabbrica deve essere formato, secondo il principio dell'organizzazione per industria; esso deve rappresentare per la classe operaia il modello della società comunista, alla quale si arriverà attraverso la dittatura del proletariato; in questa società non esisteranno più divisioni di classe, tutti i rapporti sociali saranno regolati secondo le esigenze tecniche della produzione e della organizzazione corrispondente, e non saranno subordinati ad un potere statale organizzato. La classe operaia deve comprendere tutta la bellezza e nobiltà dell'ideale per il quale

L'organizzazione dei Consigli di fabbrica si basa su questi principi: – In ogni fabbrica, in ogni sede di lavoro della classe operaia deve sorgere un organismo, a sistema rappresentativo e non burocratico, che incarni il potere del proletariato, lotti contro il potere capitalista e imponga il controllo della produzione, trascinando tutto il popolo lavoratore alla lotta rivoluzionaria per la fondazione dello Stato operaio. ~~Ogni~~ Il Consiglio di fabbrica deve nascere secondo un principio industriale, in modo che la classe operaia abbia una immagine della Società comunista quale sarà realizzata attraverso la dittatura proletaria, della Società senza divisioni di classi, in cui i rapporti tra gli uomini saranno dei puri rapporti di tecnica della produzione e non più rapporti di forza organizzata in uno Stato. La massa operaia deve comprendere la grandezza e la bellezza dell'ideale per cui lotta e si sacrifica e deve comprendere la necessità delle tappe da percorrere in questa via, deve comprendere la necessità della dittatura e della disciplina rivoluzionaria. Ogni fabbrica è divisa in reparti, ogni reparto è occupato da squadre di lavorazione: ogni squadra di reparto eleggerà un delegato, con mandato imperativo e revocabile. L'unione dei dele-

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<sup>2</sup> La versione pubblicata nel 1971 da Einaudi riporta la parola sbagliata «o».

essa lotta e si sacrifica; essa deve rendersi conto che per raggiungere questo ideale è necessario passare attraverso alcune tappe; essa deve riconoscere la necessità della disciplina rivoluzionaria e della dittatura.

Ogni azienda si suddivide in reparti e ogni reparto in squadre di mestiere: ogni squadra compie una determinata parte del lavoro; gli operai di ogni squadra eleggono un operaio, con mandato imperativo e condizionato. L'assemblea dei delegati di tutta l'azienda forma un Consiglio che elegge dal suo seno un Comitato Esecutivo. L'assemblea dei segretari politici dei Comitati Esecutivi forma il Comitato Centrale dei Consigli che elegge dal suo seno un Comitato urbano di studio per la organizzazione della propaganda, la elaborazione dei piani di lavoro, per l'approvazione dei progetti e delle proposte delle singole aziende e perfino di singoli operai, ed infine per la direzione generale di tutto il movimento.

*Consigli e C. I. durante gli scioperi*

Alcuni compiti dei Consigli di fabbrica hanno carattere prettamente tecnico e perfino industriale, come ad esempio, il controllo sul personale tecnico, il licenziamento di dipendenti che si dimostrano nemici della classe operaia, la lotta con la direzione per la conquista di

gati di tutta la fabbrica forma il Consiglio, che elegge nel suo seno un Comitato esecutivo. L'unione dei ~~Comitati~~ e segretari politici dei Comitati esecutivi formerà la centrale dei Consigli di fabbrica che avrà un suo Comitato per tutta la città per organizzare la propaganda, compilare piani di lavoro, studiare i piani e le proposte delle singole fabbriche e dei singoli operai e curare tutto l'insieme del movimento. Tra i compiti dei delegati di fabbrica, oltre quelli di carattere più strettamente industriale come controllo dei tecnici, espulsione **violenta** dalla fabbrica di quelli che erano nemici dichiarati della classe operaia, lotta con la direzione per acquistare libertà interna, studio delle possibilità produttive della fabbrica, del ~~suo~~ valore del capitale impiegato, ecc. erano anche questi: ~~come~~ ~~orga~~ preparazione militare della classe operaia, statistica esatta degli elementi capaci e fidati dal punto di vista della lotta insurrezionale, formazione dei quadri e della truppa per l'azione armata delle masse.

Il potere dei Consigli di fabbrica andò rapidamente aumentando. Questa forma di organizzazione a tipo sovietista era molto bene accettata dalle masse che si strinsero fortemente intorno ai Comitati esecutivi e li sostennero con ogni energia

diritti e libertà; il controllo della produzione della azienda e delle operazioni finanziarie.

I Consigli di fabbrica presero presto radici. Le masse accolsero volentieri questa forma di organizzazione comunista, si schierarono intorno ai Comitati esecutivi e appoggiarono energicamente la lotta contro l'autocrazia capitalistica. Quantunque nè gli industriali, nè la burocrazia sindacale volessero riconoscere i Consigli e i Comitati, questi ottennero tuttavia notevoli successi: essi scacciarono gli agenti e le spie dei capitalisti, annodarono rapporti cogli impiegati e coi tecnici per avere delle informazioni d'indole finanziaria e industriale negli affari dell'azienda; essi concentrarono nelle loro mani il potere disciplinare e dimostrarono alle masse disunte e disgregate, ciò che significa la gestione diretta degli operai nell'industria.

L'attività dei Consigli e delle Commissioni interne si manifestò più chiaramente durante gli scioperi; questi scioperi perdettero il loro carattere impulsivo, fortuito e divennero la espressione dell'attività cosciente delle masse rivoluzionarie. L'organizzazione tecnica dei Consigli e delle Commissioni interne, la loro capacità di azione si perfezionò talmente, che fu possibile ottenere in cinque minuti la sospensione dal lavoro di 16 mila operai

nella lotta contro l'autocrazia capitalistica. Non riconosciuti né dagli industriali, né dalla burocrazia sindacale, i Comitati e i Consigli di fabbrica riuscirono ad ottenere molti successi: essi spazzarono via dalle fabbriche le spie e gli agenti provocatori introdotti dai capitalisti, essi allacciarono relazioni con gli impiegati e coi capi tecnici per avere informazioni di carattere finanziario e industriale sull'azienda, essi di fatto assunsero la direzione disciplinare delle fabbriche, e fecero sentire alle masse sfruttate e taglieggiate ~~come si~~ cosa significa l'autogoverno operaio nella produzione.

L'attività dei Comitati e dei Consigli aveva la sua massima esplicazione negli scioperi interni, che perdettero il ~~loro~~ carattere impulsivo e caotico avuto finallora e divennero coscienti azioni di massa rivoluzionaria. L'apparecchio del Consiglio e del Comitato esecutivo raggiunse una tale perfezione di funzionamento che fu possibile in cinque minuti arrestare il lavoro dei 16.000 operai della Fiat-Centro, ~~in cinque minuti~~ distribuiti in 42 grandi reparti. Il 3 dicembre 1919 i Consigli dettero una prova della loro capacità a guidare le azioni di massa in grande stile: – per ordine della Sezione Socialista, che ha in mano tutto l'apparecchio del movimento

dispersi in 42 reparti della «Fiat». Il 3 dicembre 1919 i Consigli di fabbrica diedero una prova tangibile della loro capacità di dirigere movimenti di masse in grande stile; dietro ordine della Sezione Socialista, che concentrava nelle sue mani tutto il meccanismo del movimento di massa, i Consigli di fabbrica mobilitarono senza alcuna preparazione, nel corso di un'ora 120 mila operai, inquadrati secondo le aziende. Un'ora dopo si precipitò l'armata proletaria come una valanga fino nel centro della città e spazzò dalle strade e dalle piazze tutto il canagliume nazionalista e militarista.

#### *La lotta contro i Consigli*

Alla testa del movimento per la costituzione dei Consigli di fabbrica furono i comunisti appartenenti alla Sezione Socialista e le Organizzazioni sindacali; vi presero pure parte gli anarchici i quali cercarono di contrapporre la loro fraseologia ampollosa al linguaggio chiaro e preciso dei comunisti marxisti.

Il movimento incontrò però la resistenza accanita dei funzionari sindacali, della Direzione del Partito Socialista e dello «Avanti!». La polemica di questa gente si basava sulla differenza fra il concetto del Consiglio di fabbrica e quello di Soviet. Le loro conclusioni ebbero un carattere puramente teorico, astratto, burocratico.

operaio di massa, le fabbriche furono mobilitate improvvisamente: nello spazio di un'ora dall'emanazione dell'ordine, ogni fabbrica aveva costituito i suoi battaglioni proletari e 120.000 operai calarono fin nel centro della città spazzando ~~le~~ dalle vie e ~~le~~ dalle piazze ~~dalle~~ la canaglia nazionalista e militarista.

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Questo movimento delle masse operaie per la creazione dei Consigli di fabbrica fu guidato dai comunisti della Sezione Socialista e dei Sindacati professionali. Contribuirono al suo sviluppo anche gli anarchici, i quali si limitarono a sostituire una loro fraseologia esoterica al chiaro e perspicuo linguaggio dei comunisti marxisti.

Il movimento fu osteggiato aspramente dai funzionari sindacali ~~a~~ locali e centrali, e dalla Direzione del Partito Socialista e dall'*Avanti!* La polemica fu impostata da costoro sulla differenza che passa tra Consiglio di fabbrica e Soviet, ~~con~~ ~~u~~ e fu svolto secondo una mentalità libresca e burocratica: ~~fr~~ nel fragore delle frasi appariva solo la preoccupazione di evitare ogni intervento diretto delle masse nella lotta rivoluzionaria e di tenere le masse sotto la tutela dei funzionari sindacali: i compagni della Direzione del



Dietro le loro frasi altisonanti si celava il desiderio di evitare la partecipazione diretta delle masse alla lotta rivoluzionaria, il desiderio di conservare la tutela delle organizzazioni sindacali sulle masse. I componenti la Direzione del Partito si rifiutarono sempre di prendere l'iniziativa di una azione rivoluzionaria, prima che non fosse attuato un piano d'azione coordinato, ma non facevano mai nulla per preparare ed elaborare questo piano.

Il movimento torinese non riuscì però ad uscire dall'ambito locale, poichè tutto il meccanismo burocratico dei Sindacati venne messo in moto per impedire che le masse operaie delle altre parti d'Italia seguissero l'esempio di Torino. Il movimento torinese venne deriso, schernito, calunniato e criticato in tutti i modi. Le aspre critiche degli organismi sindacali e della direzione del Partito socialista incoraggiarono nuovamente i capitalisti i quali non ebbero più freno nella loro lotta contro il proletariato torinese e contro i Consigli di fabbrica. La conferenza degli industriali, tenutasi nel marzo 1920 a Milano elaborò un piano d'attacco; ma i «tutori della classe operaia», le Organizzazioni economiche e politiche non si curarono di questo fatto. Abbandonato da tutti, il proletariato torinese fu costretto ad affrontare da solo, colle proprie forze, il capita-

Partito non volevano iniziative locali prima della compilazione di un piano unico per tutto il paese, ~~con~~ che però non veniva né preparato né studiato. A Torino il progetto per il modo da seguire nelle elezioni dei delegati di fabbrica e il programma da svolgere fu studiato e preparato dagli operai stessi in riunioni di fabbrica, sotto la guida degli elementi comunisti e il Comitato centrale elaborò solo quanto gli operai avevano proposto in ordini del giorno e in lunghe risoluzioni: perciò il movimento può dirsi puramente operaio e può essere assunto come documento della elevata posizione raggiunta dal proletariato torinese nel campo industriale. Il movimento torinese non si diffuse fuori dalla provincia: tutta la macchina della burocrazia sindacale fu rivolta a impedire che le masse operaie del resto d'Italia seguissero l'esempio di Torino. Il movimento torinese fu diffamato, fu schernito, fu combattuto in ogni modo. Questo atteggiamento ostile ~~della buro~~ assunto dalle Centrali dei Sindacati e del Partito Socialista incoraggiò i capitalisti a osare tutto contro il proletariato torinese e contro i Consigli di fabbrica.

Il piano d'attacco fu preannunziato in un Convegno degli industriali tenuto a Milano nel marzo: le centrali proletarie non si curarono neppure di questo preavviso: ~~i funzionari~~

lismo nazionale e il potere dello Stato. Torino venne inondata da un esercito di poliziotti; intorno alla città si piazzarono cannoni e mitragliatrici nei punti strategici. E quando tutto questo apparato militare fu pronto, i capitalisti cominciarono a provocare il proletariato. È vero che di fronte a queste gravissime condizioni di lotta il proletariato esitò ad accettare la sfida; ma quando si vide che lo scontro era inevitabile, la classe operaia uscì coraggiosamente dalle sue posizioni di riserva e volle che la lotta fosse condotta fino alla sua fine vittoriosa.

*Il Consiglio Nazionale Socialista di Milano*<sup>3</sup>

I metallurgici scioperarono un mese intero, le altre categorie 10 giorni; l'industria in tutta la provincia era ferma, le comunicazioni paralizzate. Il proletariato torinese fu però isolato dal resto dell'Italia; gli organi centrali non fecero niente per aiutarlo; non pubblicarono<sup>4</sup> nemmeno un manifesto per spiegare al popolo italiano l'importanza della lotta dei lavoratori torinesi; l'«Avanti!» si rifiutò di pubblicare il manifesto della Sezione torinese del Partito. I compagni torinesi si buscarono dappertutto gli epi-

~~sindacali rilevarono il loro~~  
~~animo di traditori, dipen-~~  
~~dendo da e pregustando la~~  
~~lotta che gli operai~~ il proletariato torinese fu lasciato solo a lottare contro tutto il capitalismo nazionale e contro il potere dello Stato. Torino fu invasa da un esercito di poliziotti (circa 20.000), nei dintorni della città furono accampate intere brigate fatte giungere dalla linea d'armistizio: i punti strategici della città furono muniti di cannoni e mitragliatrici. Quando questo apparato militare fu ben predisposto, i capitalisti provocarono la massa operaia, che cercò di non accettare battaglia in tali disastrose condizioni, ma quando si accorse che non era possibile non accettare battaglia, scese nella lotta animosamente e volle che la lotta andasse fino in fondo. Lo sciopero durò un mese per i metallurgici e 10 giorni per tutto il proletariato: la vita industriale e dei trasporti fu arrestata completamente nella città e nella provincia. Ma il proletariato torinese fu tagliato fuori dal resto d'Italia: le centrali proletarie non lanciarono nessun manifesto al popolo italiano per spiegare il significato della lotta combattuta dagli operai torinesi, ~~non c'era~~ l'Avanti! non volle pubblicare un manifesto della Sezione **torinese** del Partito: i compagni torinesi che andavano fuori di Torino erano presentati come

<sup>3</sup> Sull'*Ordine Nuovo* la lettera «di» di «Milano» è saltata.

<sup>4</sup> Per errore, la versione pubblicata da Einaudi contiene la parola «ma» prima di «non pubblicarono».

teti di anarchici e avventurieri. In quell'epoca doveva avere luogo a Torino il Consiglio nazionale del Partito; tale convegno venne però trasferito a Milano, perché una città «in preda ad uno sciopero generale» sembrava poco adatta come teatro di discussioni socialiste.

In questa occasione si manifestò tutta l'impotenza degli uomini chiamati a dirigere il Partito; mentre la massa operaia difendeva a Torino coraggiosamente i Consigli di fabbrica, la prima organizzazione basata sulla democrazia operaia, incarnante il potere proletario, a Milano si chiacchierava intorno a progetti e metodi teorici per la formazione di Consigli come forma del potere politico da conquistare dal proletariato; si discuteva sul modo di sistemare le conquiste non avvenute e si abbandonava il proletariato torinese al suo destino, si lasciava alla borghesia la possibilità di distruggere il potere operaio già conquistato.

Le masse proletarie italiane manifestarono la loro solidarietà coi compagni torinesi in varie forme; i ferrovieri di Pisa, Livorno e Firenze si rifiutarono di trasportare le truppe destinate per Torino, i lavoratori dei porti e i marinai di Livorno e Genova sabotarono il movimento nei porti; il proletariato di molte città scese in sciopero contro gli ordini dei Sindacati.

anarchici, come scalmanati, come avventurieri. Doveva tenersi proprio in quei giorni a Torino il Consiglio Nazionale del Partito: esso fu trasportato a Milano, perché una città ~~in~~ «afflitta» dallo sciopero generale non è «adatta» per tenere discussioni socialiste! Si vide in quel momento tutta la debolezza degli uomini che dirigevano il Partito: a Torino la massa operaia lottava strenuamente per difendere il Consiglio operaio di fabbrica, per difendere il primo istituto rappresentativo in cui era incarnato il potere proletario; a Milano si discuteva sul modo di creare i Soviet, ~~di~~ sulla forma da dare al potere politico conquistato dal proletariato e intanto si lasciava solo il proletariato torinese, si lasciava che tutte le forze borghesi scatenate cercassero annientare il potere già conquistato! Le masse proletarie italiane aiutarono spontaneamente Torino: i ferrovieri di Pisa, di Livorno, di Firenze non trasportavano le truppe destinate a Torino; gli scaricatori e i marinai di Livorno e Genova ~~non vollero punto trasportare alle truppe f~~ sabotarono i trasporti marittimi: in parecchie città la classe operaia scioperò contro l'ordine dei Sindacati.

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Lo sciopero generale di Torino e del Piemonte cozzò contro il sabotaggio e la resistenza delle organizzazioni sindacali e del Partito stesso. Esso fu tuttavia di grande importanza educativa perchè dimostrò che l'unione pratica degli operai e contadini è possibile, e riprovò l'urgente necessità di lottare contro tutto il meccanismo burocratico delle Organizzazioni sindacali che sono il più solido appoggio per l'opera opportunistica dei parlamentari e dei riformisti mirante al soffocamento di ogni movimento rivoluzionario delle masse lavoratrici.

Lo sciopero generale di Torino e del Piemonte fu così sabotato dalla burocrazia sindacale e del Partito. Esso ha avuto una grande importanza educativa per tutto il proletariato italiano: ha dimostrato la possibilità di unire praticamente gli operai ai contadini, portando questi sullo stesso piano di lotta degli operai, e ha dimostrato la urgente necessità di intensificare la lotta contro la macchina burocratica sindacale che rappresenta la piattaforma su cui i parlamentari e i riformisti basano la loro azione opportunistica per soffocare e per rovinare ogni movimento delle masse.



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# The Turin Communist Movement

Antonio Gramsci

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# The Turin Communist Movement

## Abstract

*The Communist Movement in Turin*

## Translator's presentation

The specific variations between Gramsci's two Italian texts on the Turin movement are covered in Flavio Silvestrini's *Introduzione*, but a few general points should here be noted. Considerable confusion has arisen over the nature of the two versions in which the essay appeared: *The Communist Movement in Turin* (published in the various languages – see the editorial, above – of the journal "Communist International", November 1920) and *The Turin Workers' Councils Movement* ("L'Ordine Nuovo", 14 March 1921). Writers have often assumed or claimed that the two essays are one and the same; this comment also applies to an English version available on the Internet, which moreover omits about a quarter of Gramsci's text. There are, however, differences between the two articles. It seems that the manuscript, the typed-up transcription (hand-corrected by Gramsci) and its carbon copy were all sent to Moscow, so the prefatory lines (reproduced here at the start of the article itself) to the later version explain that the article as there published is based on a retranslation from the German translation of the original. Some differences between the two versions are thus explained, while the others are dealt with by Flavio Silvestrini.

Additionally, and perhaps as an aid to its translators in Moscow, some simplification is apparent in the "Communist International" version. This, for example, makes more use of the term "operai", as noun or adjective, referring to industrial workers, as compared with "lavoratori" in the broader sense of "working people", while the latter version makes a clearer distinction between the two. And while the latter version goes into detail on the Turin Cooperative Alliance (omitted from the English version on the Internet), this is dealt with more summarily for the international readership.

For some terms in the present translation, the nearest equivalent in the British context has been used; thus "Trades Council" is used for "Camera del Lavoro". For "Sindacati professionali" we have used "Trade Unions", while "sindacati" without any qualification appears simply as "unions"; workers' "delegati" elected in a factory are "stewards" or "shop stewards".

At the end of the manuscript written for the Comintern journal, Gramsci's name was added by someone else in Cyrillic, followed by "Gramchi", exactly as the name was printed at the end of the translation in number 14 of "L'Internationale Communiste". When, years later, the essay had been forgotten by nearly everyone, at the end of the top copy of the manuscript's typed transcript – which bears occasional corrections in Gramsci's hand – another person added the name "Antonio Gramsci" and a comment in Italian: "Addition. Antonio's manuscript consists of 15 pages, without crossings-out (except for pages 13 and 14). It bears no date, and no signature. Year – summer or autumn 1920. Archive of undated material. It could, even, it seems, be a report. Greetings".

The person making these various additions to the typescript then signed himself "Tu". A cross-check with other documents, some with specimens of handwriting, contained in the Fondazione Istituto Gramsci's fascicules 495-010a-187 and 188, indicates that, to a fair degree of certainty, the person in question was Rigoletto Martini, whose main pseudonym was "Tutti", sometimes seen as "Tuti". On reaching Moscow from the Spanish Civil War, he was entrusted with reorganizing the PCI in Italy, but was arrested by the fascists and died in prison aged only 34. The combination of Martini's age, the pseudonym appearing as an abbreviated signature, and the handwriting all point to him as author of the addendum.

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As well as the crossings-out in the manuscript to which Martini draws attention, Gramsci is also sometimes unsure about how best to express a phrase, and on occasion deletes words or an initial letter then rethinking an expression. Where it is possible to see their meaning, these items appear barred and underlined in the translation, as done for the Italian transcription, e.g. “had been”, while later insertions, often above the line, are indicated in blue, e.g. “at the time”; explanatory translator’s notes in the text are in square brackets.

A 1970 pamphlet, *Turin 1920. Factory Councils and General Strike*, seemingly the only publication of a certain Moulinavent Press, contains an occasionally imprecise English version of the 1921 “Ordine Nuovo” article, but detailed searching of library holdings has not come up with the English-language version of the “Communist International” article. With thanks to the Comintern Archive, where Gramsci’s original is kept (location 519-1-81, pp. 1-15), we here present a fresh translation, this time of the original manuscript.

**Keywords**

Turin, Strikes, 1917, Factory Councils, Communist Movement

## *The Turin communist movement*

Antonio Gramsci

A member of the Italian delegation who has recently returned from the Russia of the Soviets has told the Turin working class that the platform set up in Kronštadt to welcome the delegation was adorned with a banner bearing the wording: “Long live the April 1920 Turin general strike”!

The workers welcomed the news with great joy and much satisfaction. The main representatives of the delegation that went to Russia ~~had been~~ *were* very hostile to April’s general strike; they sneered at the heroic efforts made *at the time* by the Turin workers, they wrote that in that strike the Turin workers did not have a precise political consciousness, but were following just a ‘false illusion’. The Turin workers welcomed with great joy and much satisfaction the news of what had taken place at Kronštadt because they said: – The Russian communist comrades have understood and have judged the April movement better than the Italian opportunists; the Russian communist comrades through this have given the Italian opportunists a well-deserved history lesson.

The April movement in Turin was in effect a great ~~historical~~ event, not only in the history of the Italian working class but also in the history of the European and world proletariat. For the first time a proletariat was seen to take up the fight for the control of production without being forced ~~into the~~ into this struggle by unemployment and hunger. And we are not dealing just with a minority vanguard of the local working class; the entire mass of the working people in Turin went united into the struggle which they upheld forcefully, without defections, subjecting themselves to the harshest deprivations and greatest sacrifices. The strike lasted a month for the engineering workers, and ten days for the entire mass of the working people: ~~as~~ the general strike of ten days covered the whole region of Piedmont, meaning around half a million industrial workers and peasants, corresponding to almost four million inhabitants. Italy’s entire capitalist class was involved in crushing the Turin working class; the entire forces of the bourgeois State were put at the disposition of the capitalists; on their side the

workers were alone, without the support of the leading bodies of the socialist Party and the Union Confederation. the workers were, instead, subject to the mockery and defamation of the Union and Party chiefs, who did everything to throttle the movements of solidarity that the working-class and peasant masses of the whole of Italy wanted to bring into being (and in some localities did actually do so) in order to aid their brothers in Turin. However the workers did not lose heart; they bore on their shoulders the whole weight of capitalist reaction, and even after the defeat they did not cease to remain disciplined around the banner of Communism and the world Revolution: the propaganda of the anarchists and syndicalists against the discipline shown to the political Party of the class of working people and against the proletarian dictatorship was unsuccessful, even after the betrayal of the leaders had led to defeat: the Turin workers simply swore to themselves to intensify the revolutionary struggle on two fronts, against the exploitative bourgeoisie and against the opportunist and treacherous leaders.

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This strength of consciousness and revolutionary discipline among the proletarian masses of Turin finds a historical explanation in the economic and political conditions in which the class struggle is being carried on. Turin is a city ~~in~~ ~~where is~~ given over almost exclusively to industrial production. Its population, of 500,000 inhabitants, is ~~thus constituted by 350,000~~ three quarters a working-class population. Except to a minimal amount, a ~~b~~ petty bourgeoisie does not exist: ~~the intellect~~ as well as the working-class population, there exist great masses of white-collar employees and technical staff, but they work in the **big** factories, are organized in big Unions affiliated to the Trades Council, have taken part in big strikes alongside the industrial workers and the majority of them have acquired the psychology of the proletarian worker, the psychology of those who are fighting against capital for the Revolution and for Communism. The production apparatus in Turin is strongly centralized and unified. The engineering industry, with 50,000 workers and 10,000 among the white-collar and technical staff, dominates the entire industrial field: in the engineering industry one sole firm (Fiat) employs 35,000 workers, white-collar and technical

staff, and the main Fiat factory employs 16,000 people, centred ~~on the mos~~ around the most perfect automatisms of modern production. Engineering production in Turin is entirely given over to the car: the majority of the workers are skilled and specialist, but they do not at all share the petty bourgeois psychology of, for example, the skilled workers of England. The car dominates engineering production, as it also dominates some of the other big industries: that of wood and that of rubber. The engineering workers are the vanguard of the Turin proletariat: due to this unified structure of the industrial apparatus, every movement **automatically** becomes a mass movement, and its nature, even if it was initially corporative, quickly becomes political and revolutionary.

In Turin, there exists one sole big Union organization, with 90,000 members, the Trades Council. The anarchists and syndicalists represent only very small groups, without any influence on the mass: the mass is led only by the Socialist Party Section, with an absolute predominance of communist workers. The organized communist movement possesses the following bodies of struggle: the Party Section, constituted by about 1,500 members; 28 city territorial circles, with about 10,000 members; 28 young socialist Branches with around 4,000 members.<sup>1</sup> In every factory there exists a permanently constituted communist group, with its own leading committee: the groups are centralized by city zone in their Circles and finally all are centralized in the Party Section and in the Executive Committee of the Section, which has in its hands the whole of the city's organized communist movement and controls the whole mass of the working people.

Before the bourgeois revolution that led to the formation of the unitary Italian bourgeois State, Turin was the capital of the small semi-feudal State of Piedmont, Liguria and Sardinia: at that time the main activities in Turin were small-scale industry, artisan production and commerce. After the unitary Italian State was created, the capital was taken to Rome and it seemed inevitable that Turin would decay; instead the city ~~was able~~ overcame the

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<sup>1</sup> This corresponds both to the manuscript and to the typewritten transcription done at the time and corrected by hand by Gramsci; the French, German and Russian translations give 2,000 rather than 4,000 young socialists, as then does the retranslated *Ordine Nuovo* version (14 March 1921).

economic crisis, and in fifty years doubled its population, becoming the biggest industrial city in Italy. It may be said that Italy has three capitals, a political one in Rome, where all the threads of the bourgeois state administration are gathered together, a financial and commercial one, Milan, where ~~there are centre~~ the biggest banking institutes in Italy are based, and an industrial one, Turin, where ~~they have~~ the factory system has found its greatest development.

~~Since~~ The transfer of the capital took away from Turin the small and middle intellectual bourgeoisie, which provided the apparatus of the new bourgeois State with its personnel: the rise and development of big industry instead brought to Turin the flower of the whole of the Italian working class. ~~Thus it came about that historically Turin represents a~~ The process of formation of the city is one of the most interesting from the point of view of the history of Italy and the Italian proletarian Revolution. The Turin proletariat thus came to find itself at the head of an apparatus of the ‘spiritual’ government of the working masses of Italy, who are linked to Turin by many bonds – of family, of historical tradition, of ~~immigratio~~ desire (every worker in Italy wants to go and work in Turin). This explains how it ~~often~~ came about that the masses all over Italy, even against the wishes of the leaders, wanted to offer their solidarity to the general strike: they saw in Turin the capital of the communist Revolution, they saw in Turin the Petrograd of the Italian proletarian Revolution.

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In the period of the 1914-1918 imperialist war, two armed insurrections broke out in Turin. The first was in May 1915, in opposition to Italy’s entry into the war: on this occasion the Casa del Popolo<sup>2</sup> was completely ransacked by the police: the second insurrection took place in August 1917 and took on an acute form of revolutionary armed struggle. The March revolution in Russia was welcomed with immense joy in Turin: the workers wept with emotion, in the knowledge that the tsarist government had been overthrown by the insurrection of the Petrograd workers. But the

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<sup>2</sup> The “casa del popolo” played and, in some of the traditional formerly “red” areas, still does play, an important role in Italy as a popular and working-class institution, predominantly cultural and recreational in nature.



Turin workers did not allow themselves to be deceived, even minimally, by the demagogic phraseology of Kerenskij and the Men'sheviks. In July 1917, when the mission ~~of~~ sent to the West by the Petrograd Soviet arrived in Turin, the delegates Smirnov and Goldenberg,<sup>3</sup> who spoke to a crowd of over 50,000 workers, were greeted by loud cries of: Long live comrade Lenin! Long live the Bol'sheviks! The ~~Men'shevik~~ "Novaja Žizn" Goldenberg was not very satisfied by this welcome on the part of the Turin proletariat: he could not understand how comrade Lenin enjoyed so much popularity among the Turin workers. And one must bear in mind that the July insurrection had already been crushed in Petrograd, and that the Italian bourgeois press was writing furious articles against Lenin and against the Bol'sheviks, calling them bandits, adventurists, agents and spies of German imperialism!

From the beginning of Italy's war (24 May 1915) the Turin proletariat had not up to that day been able to hold any mass demonstration. The great meeting in honour of the Petrograd Soviet of workers' deputies began a new period of mass action.

~~Not even a mon~~

A month had not passed before the Turin workers rose in arms against Italian imperialism and militarism. The mass action began on 23 August 1917. For five days the workers fought in the streets and the squares. A number of areas of the city fell completely into the hands of the insurgents, who had guns, grenades and some machine guns. Three or four times, armed masses of workers attempted to conquer the centre of the city, where the public buildings and the military command headquarters ~~were~~ are; but in the two years of war the workers' revolutionary organization had been dismantled by reaction, the workers had no centre of military coordination and were<sup>4</sup> crushed by the soldiers, who were made to believe that the insurrection had been plotted by the Germans. The workers, who had built perfect barricades, trenches, and who had stretched electrified iron wire around their quarters of the city, held out for five days against assaults by troops and the police. More than 500 workers were killed in the repression, more than 2000

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<sup>3</sup> See the photograph on the cover of this issue; the short-lived "Novaja Žizn" ("New Life") newspaper, established by Maksim Gorkij and other social-democrat Internationalists was trying to bridge the divisions between Men'sheviks and Bol'sheviks among Internationalists.

<sup>4</sup> The non-existent word "furato" crept its way into Gramsci's manuscript, which he then corrected by hand to the right form "furono" ("were") in the typed-up version.

were seriously wounded. After this massacre the best elements of the working class were either arrested or sent away from Turin. There was a loss of revolutionary intensity in the movement, but it did not on account of this lose its spirit of communist mass discipline. One episode serves as a good description of this strength of socialist consciousness. Straight after the August insurrection new elections were held for the Board of Management of the Cooperative Alliance, a great [working-class](#) institution which supplies a quarter of the population of Turin. The Alliance is constituted by the union of the railway Cooperative and the General Association of workers (a great mutual benefit society). The Management Board had for many years been under the control of the Socialist Party Section, but at that moment the Section had to carry out only very limited, clandestine activity, and could no longer reach the great masses. The ~~great~~ majority of the Alliance's capital was constituted by the railway workers' shares, and many of these shares were held by the railway clerical workers and their families. The development of the Alliance had taken the effective value of each share from an initial 50 lire up to 700 lire, but the Party succeeded in persuading the shareholders that workers' Cooperation must not serve for personal gain, but for providing means for the revolutionary struggle: the shareholders therefore contented themselves with an interest of 3.50 percent on the nominal value of 50 lire and not on the real value of 700 lire. After the August insurrection, with the help of the police and the bourgeois newspapers, a Committee of reformist railway workers was formed, in order to wrench control of the Board away from the socialists. The shareholders were promised immediate payment of the difference between the real value and the nominal value of each share (650 lire); they were promised that the Cooperative would give preference to the shareholders in distributing goods. All possible propaganda was carried out by the reformist traitors and by the bourgeois newspapers to transform the Cooperative from a working-class institution into a petty bourgeois financial institution. The working class was persecuted, the voice of the socialist Section was stifled by censorship, and great suffering was caused through the lack of foodstuffs; but the majority of the cooperative was reconquered by the revolutionaries who had not bent an inch in their programme of working-class cooperation to provide the

means for class struggle. In the railway Cooperative, although ~~there were~~ many of the voters were white collar staff and one might assume a step backward on their part after the proletarian armed insurrection, 700 votes from the 800 voters went to the Party list.

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After the armistice in the imperialist war, proletarian action began afresh with great vigour and energy. The Turin proletariat clearly understood, however, that the historical period that had been opened up by the imperialist war is fundamentally different from the one immediately preceding the war, that the Third International is the world proletariat's organization for civil war, for the conquest of political power, for the proletarian dictatorship, for the foundation of a new order in the relations of production and in the social relations that depend on them. Great discussions took place in the workers' assemblies on the problems of the Revolution, on economic problems and on political ones. The working-class energies of the communist vanguard were organized around a weekly journal of communist culture, *L'Ordine Nuovo*. The polemics that took place in the pages of this weekly aimed at the goal of creating a revolutionary organization of the masses to win over the workers' Unions for communism and take the industrial struggle from the terrain of the fight for improvements in wages and hours of work onto the terrain of the revolutionary struggle for the control of production and for the dictatorship of the proletariat. The watchword was that of the factory Councils.

In the Turin factories there were small workers' Committees, recognized by the capitalists, but some of which had already begun the fight against the union bureaucracy and the legalitarian and reformist spirit of the union officials. The greater part of these Committees were, however, an emanation of the union offices, their members were proposed to the factory assemblies by the union offices and were chosen from among the most highly skilled opportunist workers, so as never to give any 'trouble' to the capitalists and so as to nip in the bud any mass movement. The propaganda carried out by the workers who followed the exhortations of *L'Ordine Nuovo* was based on transforming these

Committees,<sup>5</sup> which were intended to become the **direct** emanation of the masses and no longer of the union bureaucracy, which were intended to take on the tasks of the struggle for the control of production, of the military preparation of the masses, of activity for the economic and political education of the masses, and which should no longer [illegible cancelled word – trans. note] be involved as guard dogs for quelling mass insurrections against capitalist discipline in the factories.

The propaganda for the factory Councils was welcomed with immense enthusiasm by the masses: in the space of six months, workers' Councils had sprung up in all the engineering factories, the communists had conquered the ~~local~~ Council of the engineering Union and ~~the majority~~ the idea of factory Councils and of the fight for the control of production had conquered the majority at the Congress of the Trades Unions affiliated to the Trades Council.

The organization of the factory Councils is based on the following principles: – In every factory, in every workplace of the working class, a body must be created based on a representative and not a bureaucratic system, which embodies the power of the proletariat, fights against capitalist power and imposes control over production, drawing the whole of the working people into the revolutionary struggle for the foundation of the workers' State. ~~Every~~ The factory Council must come into being according to an industrial principle, so that the working class has an image of the communist Society as it will be realized through the proletarian dictatorship, of a Society without class divisions, in which the relations between men will be pure relationships of production technique and no longer those of force organized in a State. The working-class mass must understand the greatness and beauty of the ideal for which it is fighting and sacrificing itself and must understand the necessity of the stages it has to go through along this road, must understand the need for a dictatorship and for revolutionary discipline. Every factory is divided into shops, and each shop is occupied by work teams: every workshop team will elect a shop steward, with an imperative and revocable mandate. The union of the stewards of the whole factory forms the Council,

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<sup>5</sup> Here in the manuscript. Gramsci uses a singular "this" (*questo*) and a plural "Committees" (*Comitati*), but a few lines earlier had used "some of which" (*qualcuno dei quali*, with a plural reference). The later version, published in "L'Ordine Nuovo", has the plural form.

which from its ranks elects an executive Committee. The Union of the ~~Committees~~ political secretaries of the executive Committees will form the central body of the factory Councils, which will have its own Committee for the whole city in order to organize propaganda, compile work plans, study the plans and the proposals of the single factories and of the single workers and take care of the movement in its entirety. Among the tasks of the factory shop stewards, apart from those of a more strictly industrial nature, such as control over the technical staff, **violent** expulsion from the factory of those who were the declared enemies of the working class, struggle against the management to acquire internal freedom, study of the production possibilities of the factory, of ~~its~~ the value of the capital employed, etc., there were also the following: ~~as-organ~~ military preparation of the working class, precise statistics of the elements who are capable and trustworthy from the viewpoint of insurrectionary struggle, cadre formation and troop formation for the armed action of the masses.

The power of the factory Councils increased rapidly. This form of organization of a soviet type was very well received by the masses, who united firmly around the executive Committees and supported them with great strength in the fight against capitalist autocracy. These Committees and factory Councils, recognized neither by the industrialists nor by the union bureaucracy, managed to obtain many successes; they swept away from the factories the spies and the agents provocateurs put there by the capitalists, they created relations with the white collar employees and technical chiefs in order to have financial and industrial information regarding the firm, they actually took over the disciplinary management of the factories, and made the exploited and extortion-ridden masses understand ~~what-it~~ what workers' self-management means in production.

The activity of the Committees and Councils was deployed to the full in the strikes within the factories, which lost ~~their~~ the impulsive and chaotic nature that they had had up to then, and became conscious actions of the revolutionary mass. The apparatus of the Council and the executive Committee reached such a working perfection that it was possible **within five minutes** to bring to a standstill the work of the 16,000 Fiat-Centre workers ~~in-five minutes~~, distributed among 42 big workshops. On 3 December

1919, the Councils gave proof of their capacity to lead mass actions in the grand style: – on the order of the Socialist Section, which has in its hands the entire apparatus of the mass working-class movement, the factories were unexpectedly mobilized in the space of an hour by the proclamation of an order; every factory had constituted its proletarian battalions and 120,000 workers descended into the city centre, sweeping ~~the~~ from the streets and ~~the~~ from the squares ~~of the~~ the nationalist and militarist rabble.

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This movement of the working-class masses for the creation of the factory Councils was led by the communists of the Socialist Section and of the Trades Unions. A contribution to its development also came from the anarchists, who limited themselves to substituting some exoteric phraseology of theirs to the clear, lucid language of the Marxist communists.

Harsh obstacles were placed in the way of the movement by the local and central union officials, ~~and~~ by the Socialist Party Executive and by *Avanti!* The polemic of these people was based on the difference existing between factory Council and Soviet, ~~with a~~ and was carried on with a bookish and bureaucratic mentality: ~~it was~~ from the resounding phrases there emerged only the preoccupation to avoid any direct intervention by the masses in the revolutionary struggle and to keep the masses under the control of the union officials: the comrades of the Party Executive wanted no local initiatives before they had put together a single plan for the whole country, ~~with~~ which however was neither prepared nor studied. In Turin the project for the method to follow for the elections of the factory stewards and for the programme to be undertaken was studied and prepared by the workers themselves in factory meetings, under the guidance and leadership of the communist elements, and the central Committee developed only what the workers had proposed in motions and in long resolutions: the movement can therefore be said to be purely working-class and can be assumed as documentary evidence of the high level reached by the Turin proletariat in the industrial field. The Turin movement did not extend outside the province: the whole machinery of the union bureaucracy was brought into play to prevent the working-



class masses of the rest of Italy from following the example of Turin. The Turin movement was slandered, was sneered at, was fought in every way. This hostile attitude ~~of the bureau~~ assumed by the central organs of the Unions and the Socialist Party encouraged the capitalists to go all-out against the Turin proletariat and against the factory Councils. The plan of attack was prefigured at a Conference of the industrialists held in Milan in March: the central organs of the proletariat paid no attention even to this warning; ~~the union officials revealed their nature as traitors, depending on and foretasting the struggle that the workers~~ the Turin proletariat was left isolated to fight against the whole of national capitalism and against the power of the State. Turin was invaded by an army of policemen (around 20,000), there were encamped around the city whole brigades brought in from the armistice line: cannons and machine guns were stationed at the strategic points of the city. After this military apparatus had been well deployed, the capitalists provoked the mass of the working class, which tried not to give battle in such disastrous circumstances, but when it was realized that it was not possible not to go into battle, it went into the fight courageously with the will for it to go on to the bitter end. The strike went on for a month for the engineering workers and 10 days for the entire proletariat. The life of industry and transport was brought to a complete standstill in the city and province. But the Turin proletariat was cut off from the rest of Italy: the central proletarian organs launched no manifesto to the Italian people to explain the meaning of the battle fought by the Turin workers, ~~there was no~~ *l'Avanti!* was unwilling to publish a manifesto of the [Turin](#) Section of the Party; the Turin comrades who went outside Turin were presented as anarchists, as hotheads, as adventurists. Exactly at that time the National Council of the Party should have been held in Turin: it was transferred to Milan, because a city 'afflicted' by a general strike is not 'appropriate' for holding socialist discussions! One saw in that moment all the weakness of the men who were leading the Party: in Turin the working-class mass was fighting strenuously to defend the workers' factory Council, to defend the first representative institution embodying proletarian power; in Milan they were discussing how to create Soviets, ~~of~~ the form to give political power once it had been conquered by the proletariat, and meanwhile they

left the Turin proletariat in isolation, they allowed all the bourgeois forces that had been unleashed to try and annihilate the power that had already been conquered! The masses of the Italian proletariat spontaneously came to the aid of Turin: the railway workers of Pisa, of Livorno, of Florence did not transport the troops destined for Turin; the dockworkers and seamen of Livorno and Genoa ~~refused point-blank to transport other troops f~~ sabotaged sea transport; in several cities the working class went on strike against the orders of the Unions.

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This was the way the general strike in Turin and Piedmont was sabotaged by the bureaucracy of the union and the Party. It has had a great educational importance for the entire Italian proletariat: it has demonstrated the possibility of uniting in practice the workers to the peasants, bringing these latter on to the same plane of struggle as the workers, and has demonstrated the urgent necessity to intensify the fight against the bureaucratic union machine which represents the platform on which the parliamentarians and reformists are basing their opportunistic action to throttle and ruin each and every mass movement.





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# From the Nation to the People of a Potential New Historical Bloc: Rethinking Popular Sovereignty through Gramsci

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# From the Nation to the People of a Potential New Historical Bloc: Rethinking Popular Sovereignty through Gramsci

## **Abstract**

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## **Abstract**

During the past decades traditional notions of sovereignty have been challenged in Europe. First, we have the erosion of sovereignty induced by the process of European Integration. Secondly, the new waves of migrants and refugees arriving in Europe and the anti-immigrant and anti-refugee policies of 'Fortress Europe' and 'closed borders' along with the intensification of racism and islamophobia, both as ideological climate but also as official state policy, have opened up the debate regarding the relation between sovereignty and ethnicity. On the one hand, any attempt towards a rupture with the embedded and constitutionalised neoliberalism of the EU in order to initiate processes of social transformation and emancipation, should necessarily take the form of a reclaiming of popular sovereignty and democratic control over crucial aspects of economic and social policy. On the other hand, we must deal with the association of sovereignty with nationalism, racism and colonialism, tragically exemplified in the way the Far Right links the question of sovereignty to its own authoritarian racist agenda. To deal with these challenges I take a critical position to both neo-Kantian conceptions of cosmopolitan rights and 'neo-republican' defences of the nation-state and the people as common history and shared values. In contrast I suggest that we rethink the people in a 'post-nationalist' and de-colonial way as the emerging community of all the persons that work, struggle and hope on a particular territory, as the reflection of the emergence of a potential historical bloc

## **Keywords**

People, Nationalism, EU, Racism, Gramsci, Historical Bloc, Popular Sovereignty

*From the Nation to the People of a Potential  
New Historical Bloc: Rethinking Popular  
Sovereignty through Gramsci*

Panagiotis Sotiris

*Introduction*

The very notion of sovereignty and all the political notions associated with it have been facing a series of important challenges, especially in Europe. On the one hand we have all the recent developments in the construction of the European Project and the entrance to the era of the 'Memoranda of Understanding' that represent an even more aggressive version of the reduced sovereignty that has been, one way or the other, at the centre of European Integration from the beginning. The very notion that a country, such as Greece and to a lesser degree Ireland or Portugal, can be put under supervision and surveillance, with all major policy decisions being referred to the endless negotiations with the European institutions, exemplifies this tendency. From the euro as a form of ceding of national monetary sovereignty to the Treaties that give priority to European Institutions and the new mechanisms of disciplinary supervision of member states' economies, exemplified in the Greek experience, the European Integration process has been a process of imposition of a condition of reduced and limited sovereignty, affecting not only 'peripheral countries' but also countries of the EU core. Moreover, these developments make sovereignty a particular exigency, in the sense that any break with austerity and neoliberalism has to take the form of the exercise of a sovereign collective will over other institutional constraints, such as the terms of the EU treaties, the role of the ECB or the financial, monetary and institutional architecture of the Eurozone.

On the other hand, the new waves of migrants and refugees arriving in Europe and the anti-immigrant and anti-refugee policies of 'Fortress Europe' and 'closed borders' along with the intensification of racism and Islamophobia, both as ideological

climate but also as official state policy, have opened up the debate regarding the relation between sovereignty and ethnicity.

The reaction to the current wave of refugees and migrants from the entire systemic political spectrum, along with the new versions of the ‘clash of civilizations’ associated with an antiterrorist policy that is based even more upon Islamophobia, stress the fact that questions of identity and ethnicity remain a highly contested terrain and that we are facing a return to nationalist and racist discourses and practices. The same goes for the recurring insistence of the Far Right on a form of sovereignty strongly associated with the nation, defined in an almost racist way.

Recent developments, such as the British vote in favour of recuperating the aspects of sovereignty that were ceded as part of participation in the European Union, and the political and ideological confrontations surrounding the British debate, before and after the referendum, also brought forward this challenge. Without underestimating all the ugly aspects of xenophobia and racism expressed in parts of the Brexit campaign, it is obvious that important segments of the working class and other subaltern classes saw in the reclaiming of sovereignty a way out of austerity, lack of democracy, lack of control over their lives.<sup>1</sup>

At the same time, in contemporary debates in the Left one can see the tension between different positions but also the tension *inside* each position. For example, the supporters of the position that any attempt to establish social and political rights for those who fall outside the limits of the nation necessarily implies some form of transnational polity have to face the fact that contemporary transnational institutions such as the EU in fact not only are instrumental in establishing new forms of exclusion (such as increased barriers on refugees and migrants and in general non ‘EU-nationals’), but also play an important part in the erosion of any possibility of democratically opting for policies representing the collective interests of the subaltern classes.<sup>2</sup> At the same time, those who support some form of reclaiming sovereignty as part of an attempt to re-establish democracy in opposition to neoliberalism

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<sup>1</sup> For a detailed analysis of the different dynamics inside the Leave vote in the British Referendum see Watkins 2016.

<sup>2</sup> This was exemplified in Jean Claude-Juncker’s statement that “there can be no choice against European treaties” (Sudais 2015).

have to face the fact that any return to a traditional 'national' definition of the collective political body of democracy will lead to various forms of exclusion.

So the question I will try to deal with in this text, albeit in a rather schematic way, is whether it is possible to articulate the demand to reclaim sovereignty as part of a democratic and emancipative project on the part of the subaltern classes, which will take account of the fact of mass migration and mass refugee movements and avoid falling into the pitfalls of varieties of nationalism, exclusion and even state-sanctioned racism. But first we must see the answers that have been offered so far.

### 1. *The limits of neo-Kantian cosmopolitanism*

One is what we might call the Neo-Kantian answer. Kant (1795) formulated his conception of cosmopolitan rights in his text on perpetual peace when he suggested three interconnected principles in order to attain peace in the new international landscape that was formed by the emergence of the nation-State: a) that the civil constitution of every state must be republican; b) that the rights of nations shall be based on a federation of free states; and c) that the cosmopolitan right shall be limited to conditions of universal hospitality. As many commentators have already noted,<sup>3</sup> one can already see here the expression of tensions that we also see today, such as the tension between the nation-State and a universal form of rights, leading to Kant substituting the fully cosmopolitan right, namely a global form of full political rights, with a right of hospitality. We also know, both from historical experience and from writings such as Hannah Arendt's, how the contemporary international law on migrants and refugees was formed after the experience of big masses of stateless populations in the first half of the twentieth century and the emergence as a political and juridical question of the "right to have rights".

Man of the twentieth century has become just as emancipated from nature as eighteenth-century man was from history. History and nature have become equally alien to us, namely, in the sense that the essence of man can no longer be comprehended in terms of either category. On the other hand, humanity,

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<sup>3</sup> See for example Benhabib 2004.

which for the eighteenth century, in Kantian terminology, was no more than a regulative idea, has today become an inescapable fact. This new situation, in which “humanity” has in effect assumed the role formerly ascribed to nature or history, would mean in this context that the right to have rights, or the right of every individual to belong to humanity, should be guaranteed by humanity itself. It is by no means certain whether this is possible. For, contrary to the best-intentioned humanitarian attempts to obtain new declarations of human rights from international organizations, it should be understood that this idea transcends the present sphere of international law which still operates in terms of reciprocal agreements and treaties between sovereign states; and, for the time being, a sphere that is above the nations does not exist. (Arendt 1958, p. 298)

Today, the neo-Kantian perspective mainly takes the form of an increased emphasis on the emergence of institutional forms of transnational political cooperation and the potential creation of elements of a global political cooperative and even federative form that would guarantee the universal character of basic human rights and exactly guarantee the “right to have rights”.

Jürgen Habermas’ propositions regarding the emergence of a postnational configuration presents exactly this tendency. Naturally, Habermas is well aware of the neoliberal and undemocratic character of the actual construction of European Union, yet he sees it as the only way to actually create a postnational political form that would guarantee rights and reinstate the welfare state, provided that there is an enhancement of democratic procedures and forms of postnational political education. Habermas’ suggestion that it is possible as part of the process of European Integration to see the emergence of democratic forms at the European level that could foster the development of a cosmopolitan consciousness and forms of truly global citizenship is based upon his particular conception of democracy itself. Democracy is not the exercise of a collective popular will, but rather a complex series of deliberative processes as communicative practices that enhance the emergence of more rational forms:

Today, the public sovereignty of the people has withdrawn into legally institutionalized procedures and the informal, more or less discursive opinion- and will-formation made possible by basic rights. I am assuming here a network of different communicative forms, which, however, must be organized in such a way that one can presume they bind public

administration to rational premises. In so doing, they also impose social and ecological limits on the economic system, yet without impinging on its inner logic. This provides a model of deliberative politics. This model no longer starts with the macrosubject of a communal whole but with anonymously intermeshing discourses. (Habermas 1996, p. 505)

Then democracy at the European level does not imply the emergence of a European people or demos (as collective will and identity) but rather the intensification of these processes of deliberation in all their complexity.

The European market will set in motion a greater horizontal mobility and multiply the contacts among members of different nationalities. In addition to this, immigration from Eastern Europe and the poverty-stricken regions of the Third World will heighten the multicultural diversity of society. This will no doubt give rise to social tensions. But if those tensions are dealt with productively, they can foster a political mobilization that will give additional impetus to the new endogenous social movements already emergent within nation-States – I am thinking of the peace, environmental, and women's movements. These tendencies would strengthen the relevance that public issues have for the lifeworld. At the same time, there is a growing pressure of problems that can be solved only at a coordinated European level. Under these conditions, communication complexes could develop in Europe-wide public spheres. These publics would provide a favorable context both for new parliamentary bodies of regions that are now in the process of merging and for a European Parliament furnished with greater authority. (Habermas 1996, pp. 506-507)

Habermas is fully aware that at the international level there are difficulties even for this communicative and argumentative form of deliberation that he offers as an alternative to popular sovereignty with the boundaries of the nation-State.

In a politically constituted community organized via a state, this compromise formation is more closely meshed with procedures of deliberative politics, so that agreements are not simply produced by an equalization of interests in terms of power politics. Within the framework of a common political culture, negotiation partners also have recourse to common value orientations and shared conceptions of justice, which make an understanding beyond instrumental-rational agreements possible. But on the international level this “thick” communicative embeddedness is missing. (Habermas 2001, p. 109)

Habermas thinks that we can find new forms of postnational unifying identity in exactly this attachment to these democratic procedures, at the national and transnational level, which he defines as a form of “constitutional patriotism”.

As the examples of multicultural societies like Switzerland and the United States demonstrate, a political culture in which constitutional principles can take root need by no means depend on all citizens’ sharing the same language or the same ethnic and cultural origins. A liberal political culture is only the common denominator for a constitutional patriotism (*Verfassungspatriotismus*) that heightens an awareness of both the diversity and the integrity of the different forms of life coexisting in a multicultural society. In a future Federal Republic of European States, the same legal principles would also have to be interpreted from the perspectives of different national traditions and histories. (Habermas 1996, p. 500)

However, it is exactly here that the problem with Habermas’ position lies: in his conception of democratic politics. His communicative conception of the “categorical imperative”, ever since his *Theory of Communicative Action*, means that, both at the national and the international level, he has moved away from politics as confrontation or struggle between antagonistic class strategies (even if they are articulated as competing versions of what is the “collective will” of society), towards a normative and procedural conception of politics as attempt towards creating optimal conditions of communication and argumentation.

Such a discourse-theoretical understanding of democracy changes the theoretical demands placed on the legitimacy conditions for democratic politics. A functioning public sphere, the quality of discussion, accessibility, and the discursive structure of opinion- and will-formation: all of these could never entirely replace conventional procedures for decision-making and political representation. But they do tip the balance, from the concrete embodiments of sovereign will in persons, votes, and collectives to the procedural demands of communicative and decision-making processes. And this loosens the conceptual ties between democratic legitimacy and the familiar forms of state organization. (Habermas 2001, pp. 110-111)

That is why Habermas tends towards rather modest proposals for increased participation of NGOs and social movements in negotiation processes, as part of this procedural and communicative conception of collective practice.



[T]he institutionalized participation of non-governmental organizations in the deliberations of international negotiating systems would strengthen the legitimacy of the procedure insofar as mid-level transnational decision-making processes could then be rendered transparent for national public spheres, and thus be reconnected with decision-making procedures at the grassroots level. (Habermas 2001, p. 111)

However, the experience of all recent negotiations of international agreements and treaties along with the everyday functioning of the EU has shown that such deliberations do not fundamentally alter the course of things or affect the actual decision processes. In certain cases, they are simply attempts to offer legitimization to processes that are fundamentally authoritarian and undemocratic.

On her part, Seyla Benhabib has offered a problematized version of the Kantian conceptualization of cosmopolitan rights, by means of a reading of Arendt's critical approach to both the nation-State and world government. She is aware of what she defines as the "paradox of democratic legitimacy", namely the fact that the rights of the subaltern have to be negotiated upon a terrain "flanked by human rights on the hand and sovereignty assertions on the other" (Benhabib 2004, p. 47). Consequently, what she suggests is a form of cosmopolitan federalism, based upon porous – not open – borders based upon a combination between the rights of refugees and migrants and the acceptance of the continuous existence of nation-States.

In the spirit of Kant, therefore, I have pleaded for moral universalism and cosmopolitan federalism. I have not advocated *open* but rather *porous* borders. I have pleaded for first-admittance rights for refugees and asylum-seekers, but have accepted the right of democracies to regulate the transition from full membership. (Benhabib 2004, p. 220-221)

The main problem with this neo-Kantian approach is, in my opinion, two-fold. Faced with the contradiction between the abstract universalism of a normative conception of cosmopolitan rights, itself based upon the projection of a universal community of human beings as subjects, which is obviously unattainable, they easily opt for a more realistic approach of trying to guarantee some

aspects of these rights as part of actual national or supranational configuration, leading to all forms of compromises with current policies, policies that in the end run counter to exactly this conception of universal rights.

In this sense, it is exactly the European Union and its evolution that up to now offers a very material counterargument to the neo-Kantian position. The emerging constitutionalism without democracy, in the form of a guarantee of basic rights (for 'EU nationals') that goes hand and in hand with an authoritarian erosion of democratic process without precedent, and with the dismantling of social rights and the welfare state, offers the absolute limit of any attempt to think of European Integration as the materialization of Kant's vision.<sup>4</sup>

Moreover, the new forms of exclusion and the new barriers to migration and the right to safe passage of refugees make it evident that the EU is far from enforcing any kind of cosmopolitan rights. Finally, the new forms of anti-terrorist preventive practices such as attempts at detecting early signs of 'radicalization', along with officially treating the Muslim segments of the European working classes as potentially 'dangerous classes', imply the continuity of elements of a colonial ideology and practice, this time turned towards the interior of European Union.<sup>5</sup>

Some, exemplified by Sandro Mezzadra and Brett Neilson's conceptualization of a radical politics of border struggles as productions of new commons, have attempted to go beyond the normative universalism of this Kantian conception of cosmopolitan rights. However, in the end, they cannot avoid the oscillation between a radical emphasis on the singularity of struggles that create, in their multitudinous plurality, the new translations of the common, and an acceptance of the framework of European Integration or other institutional forms of 'globalization' as given. This is based upon the premise that many struggles can no longer be waged at the level of the national-state:

While the exclusionary dimension of the nation-State, symbolized and implemented by the border, is still very much present in the contemporary

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<sup>4</sup> On the evolution of the EU see Anderson 2009; Lapavistas *et al.* 2012; Durand (ed.) 2013.

<sup>5</sup> On Islamophobia as an alarming global trend see Kumar 2012; Kundnani 2014; Todd 2015.

world, there still are “defensive” struggles, for instance, for social commons, that are fought at the level of the state. This is probably rightly so. But independently of what we have written about the structural antinomy between the public and the common, the political production of space historically associated with the state no longer offers an effective shield against capital. This means it is a matter of realism for the political project of the common to refuse the idea of positioning itself within existing bounded institutional spaces and to look for the necessary production of new political spaces. (Mezzadra and Neilson 2013, p. 303)

This leads to a position that, while it is oriented toward radical forms of emancipation that transcend the capitalist horizon, at the same time it is ready to accept the possibility of more ‘realist’ positions within the framework even of European Integration.

It would be too easy, but no less true, to maintain that the current crisis of European integration makes the huge intellectual investments since the early 1990s in the postnational citizenship emerging in its frame at least over-proportioned. This is not to say that we do not see a chance for the political project of the common in the gaps of official institutional structures, which are themselves in-the-making, multilevel, and crisscrossed by multiple crises in Europe and elsewhere in the world. We are convinced that social struggles can nurture a new political imagination capable of working through current processes of regional integration and of opening them toward a reinvention of internationalism. (Mezzadra and Neilson 2013, p. 305)

In a similar manner we see in Saskia Sassen’s work an attempt to re-think the possibility of a “global civil society” not in terms of a normative conception but of an articulation of struggles at the global level that also has the problem of taking as somewhat given the current forms of ‘globalization’, even if the emphasis is on struggles rather than institutional forms.

The category of global civil society is, in a way, too general to capture the specific transboundary networks and formations connecting or articulating multiple places and actors. A focus on these specifics brings “global civil society” down to the spaces and practices of daily life, furthered by today’s powerful imaginaries around the idea that others around the world are engaged in the same struggles. This begins to constitute a sense of global civil society that is rooted in the daily spaces of people rather than on some global stage. It also means that the poor, those who cannot travel, can be part of global civil society. I include here cross-border networks of activists engaged in specific localized struggles with an explicit or implicit global agenda and

non- cosmopolitan forms of global politics and imaginaries attached to local issues and struggles. (Mezzadra and Neilson 2013, p. 305)

## *2. Balibar and the contradictions of citizenship*

In light of the above, Étienne Balibar's attempts to rethink questions of citizenship are of great interest. Balibar underlines the fact that the exclusionary aspect of nationalism and even racism were one pole of the contradiction of the emergence of contemporary political forms associated with the nation-State, the other being the demand for equality and liberty, what he defines with the neologism "equaliberty".

Here is the extraordinary novelty and at the same time the root of all the difficulties, the nub of the contradiction. If one really wants to read it literally, the Declaration in fact says that equality is identical to freedom, is equal to freedom, and vice versa. Each is the exact measure of the other. This is what I propose to call, with a deliberately baroque phrase, the proposition of equaliberty – a portmanteau term, impossible and yet possible only as a play on words, that alone expresses the central proposition. (Balibar 2014, p. 46)

The key point is a new form of citizenship based upon the contradictory identification of rights of citizen and rights of man. This new form of citizenship opens up a way for the expansion of the very sphere of politics in ways that also enable the political participation and demands of the subaltern classes.

[T]he signification of the equation Man = Citizen is not so much the definition of a political right as the affirmation of a universal right to politics. Formally, at least – but this is the very type of a form that can become a material weapon – the Declaration opens an indefinite sphere for the politicization of rights claims, each of which reiterates in its own way the demand for citizenship or for an institutional, public inscription of freedom and equality. The rights claims of workers or of dependents as well as those of women or slaves, and later those of the colonized, is inscribed within this indefinite opening, as we see in attempts beginning in the revolutionary period. (Balibar 2014, p. 50)

Moreover, this emerging new conception of citizenship is also accompanied by a new conception of sovereignty based upon this new conception of politics, this new politicization of society, this new opening up of the political space.

As far as sovereignty is concerned, as I have tried to show elsewhere, the revolutionary innovation consists precisely in subverting the traditional concept by posing the highly paradoxical thesis of an egalitarian sovereignty – practically a contradiction in terms, but the only way to radically get rid of all transcendence and inscribe the political and social order in the element of immanence, of the self-constitution of the people. From there, however, begins the immediate development of a whole series of contradictions that proceed from the fact that so-called civil society and especially the state are entirely structured by hierarchies or dependencies that are both indifferent to political sovereignty and essential to its institutionalization, even though society or the modern city no longer has at its disposal the means of the ancient city for neutralizing these contradictions and pushing them out of the public sphere, namely, the rigorous compartmentalization of the *oikos* and the polis. (Balibar 2014, p. 42)

However, this new formulation of politics is from the beginning traversed by an important contradiction between a politics of insurrection, the revolutionary aspect of the emergence of democratic politics, and a politics of constitution, the politics associated with the State and the established order.

[T]his affirmation introduces an individual oscillation, induces a structural equivocation between two obviously antinomic politics: a politics of insurrection and a politics of constitution – or, if you prefer, a politics of permanent, uninterrupted revolution and a politics of the state as institutional order. (Balibar 2014, p.p. 52-53)

It is here that we find the problem with the emergence of the Nation as the political and ideological form of the new collective subject of democratic politics. Balibar insists that we can witness this tension even at the moment of the French Revolution:

The system of Fraternity tends to be doubled into a national fraternity and, before long, a statist, revolutionary, social fraternity wherein extreme egalitarianism finds expression in communism. The meaning of the Nation changes: it no longer means all the citizens in opposition to the monarch and the privileged, but the idea of a historical belonging centered on the state. At the extreme, through the mythification of language, culture, and national traditions, it will become the French version of nationalism, the idea of a moral and cultural community founded on institutional traditions. Opposed to it, on the contrary, the notion of the people drifts toward the general idea of the proletariat as the people's people. (Balibar 2014, p. 55)

For Balibar this tension points to the fact that “political modernity comprises two antithetical movements with respect to ‘anthropological differences’”. On the one hand, we have the universalism that “promoted or invented a notion of the citizen that implies not only that an individual belongs to a community but also that he has access to a system of rights from which *no human being can be legitimately excluded*.” (Balibar 2017, p. 275). On the other hand, “modernity enlarges as never before the project of *classifying* human beings precisely in terms of their differences” (Balibar 2017, p. 276). This can explain the violence and brutality of modern forms of exclusion and racism.

*Because the human and the political (the “rights of man” and the “rights of the citizen”) are coextensive “by right,” the human being cannot be denied access to citizenship unless, contradictorily, he is also excised from humanity.* Therefore – and I apologize for the brutality of a formulation that is nonetheless all-too-relevant in reality because of past and present exclusions based on race, sex, deviance, pathologies, to mention only a few – the human being can be denied such access only by being reduced to subhumanity or defective humanity. (Balibar 2017, p. 276)

Consequently, Balibar’s proposition for a “transnational citizenship”(Balibar 2003) is an attempt to answer the problems associated with racism and exclusion and the grand movements of migrants and refugees, at the same time acknowledging the persistence of the nation-State and the new challenges posed by the emergence of forms like the European Union. This is also evident in his attempt to discuss ways to “democratize democracy” in ways that incorporate contemporary struggles, treating insurrection as the “active modality of citizenship: the modality that it brings into *action*.” (Balibar 2015, p. 131). The problem is that, although Balibar is in no way a naive partisan of European Integration, something exemplified in his insistence that “along with the development of a formal ‘European Citizenship’, a real ‘European Apartheid’ has emerged” (Balibar 2003, p. 121), in the end he attempts to take it for granted as the terrain for such a strategy.

### *3. The problems with the neo-republican defence of the nation-State*

A certain opposition to the above discussed positions comes in the form of what we can define as a neo-republican defence of the nation-State and of national identities. Here the line of reasoning is the following. Despite the rhetoric of globalization, nation-States remain indispensable nodes for the reproduction of capitalism. Emerging supranational forms, such as the European Union and the entire drive towards European Integration tend to undermine nation-States in favour of the forces of globalized capital and also to erode democracy by sharply reducing the terrain and scope of popular sovereignty. Capitalist elites accept this condition of limited or eroded sovereignty because they want to be part of globalized reproduction of capitalist accumulation. This erosion of democracy undermines democracy, because democracy can only be an active political condition when there are a demos and a popular will that can be exercised in a particular territory. There can be no supranational demos and consequently no cosmopolitan democracy.

Up until this point, this neo-republican argument indeed points to actual problems with contemporary forms of reduced sovereignty and the absence of real democratic process at the level of supranational institutional arrangements such as the European Union. However, there is another aspect to this argument: the association of demos with the nation. According to this argument the political body, in order to be a democratic political body, requires an element of common culture, history and community, a necessary commitment to a common identity. Consequently, the argument goes, contemporary 'multiculturalism', in the sense of mass migration but also in the sense of emergence of a globalized mass culture has undermined the necessary common identity and common commitment that is the backbone of the emergence of the modern forms of popular sovereignty. Some versions of this argument have been used by the Far Right in order to defend their own version of neo-racist politics, especially in relation to closed borders and discriminations against migrants and refugees in the name of a return to the necessary supposed 'purity of the nation' or of the purity of the 'national culture'.

In other instances, this discourse distances itself from any openly racist arguments, but it does centre upon the need for some common elements of political culture that supposedly enable this

re-emergence of the demos-people of the nation-State. The French version of 'Republicanism' offers such a case.<sup>6</sup> And it is interesting to see the positions of some of the left-wing proponents of neo-republicanism.

Perhaps the most telling case is that of Régis Debray. The former *guerrillero* already in 1978 was insisting on the importance of the national aspects of any revolutionary sequence:

The reason is that if the masses do make history, and if they are not an abstraction roaming around above existing frontiers and languages – if they exist only within circumscribed cultural and natural communities – then they make history as and where they are, from below and not above, piece-meal and not globally. There is no one single history for everybody; the time of history is not the same in Tokyo, Paris, Peking and Venezuela. When a world revolutionary programme attempts to gather multiplicity into unity and rationalize the whole movement, it goes against the historical process itself, for the latter proceeds from unity to multiplicity. Things always happen from below, multiplicity is always victorious. (Debray 1978, p. 37)

It is obvious that we are still dealing here with an attempt to see the national aspects of any potential revolutionary sequence, echoing in a certain manner the relation of national and social struggles in the revolutionary movements in the Third World. However, from the 1980s onwards, Debray's positions moved from the question of revolution to the question of what constitutes the reclaiming of the French republican tradition. As Émile Chabal has stressed, for Debray the Republic as "a repository of national memory, cultural heritage and enlightenment values [...] is the only possible bulwark against the decadence of Democracy and the warped ethics of financial capitalism" (Chabal 2015, p. 41). More recently, he has offered an impressive defence of frontiers in which he attacks all those who call for a world without borders as being defenders of the economism of the 'global marketplace', of 'technicism', of 'absolutism' and of imperialism, against which he calls for "a right to the frontier" (Debray 2010).

Another example is the work of Jacques Sapir, a former student of Charles Bettelheim, a specialist in the transition from the USSR to Russia and one of the fiercest critics of globalization but also of

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<sup>6</sup> For a definition and critique of current neo-republicanism in the French context, see Todd 2015.



European Integration. However interesting are many of his observations regarding globalization, the problems with the Eurozone and his critique of the EU, at the same time his positions encapsulate the problem with a certain version of the neo-republican argument. Sapir is careful to avoid any identification of the Nation to race or even common origin. What he insists upon is the centrality of the people, defined as political body sharing common values and not common ancestry. This unity of the political body is threatened, according to Sapir, by new forms of communitarianism, especially those related to religion. For Sapir the attack on sovereignty opens up the way for its dissolution. The unity of the people requires secularism, because it is secularism that relegates these religious and communitarian elements to the private sphere. “We cannot have a people, the base of the political construction of popular sovereignty, without secularism which confines to the private sphere the divergences upon which no discussion can be held” (Sapir 2016, Kindle locations 308-314). Sapir refuses any conceptualization of ethnicity in biological terms, yet he insists on the need for anyone participating in the nation to share the history and the language of any society s/he participates in. Consequently, in a certain way he is *a posteriori* making a certain reference to national identity a prerequisite for participation in the political process.

Ethnicity [*l’ethnie*] is a social construction and not a biological reality and sometimes it has to do with a discursive myth used to separate one population from another. But after we have repeated these truths, we will, nevertheless, be confronted with the acquisition of the necessary rules for a life in society by those that newly arrive to become part of a population. And it is here that we find the frontier between the mythical discourse of a “big replacement” and the fact, equally real, of the failure of integration of a part of the immigrant populations, because these do not have the references that they could assimilate. Integration is a process of assimilation of rules and customs which is in part conscious – we make an effort to learn the language and history into which we want to integrate into – but it is equally unconscious. For this unconscious mechanism to be put into motion there is also need of a reference point. Disappearing or effacing this reference point in the name of a multiculturalism that only means the tolerance to practices that are very different is a real obstacle to this integration. (Sapir 2016, Kindle location 1058-1067)

It is here that we see the crucial semantic shift of this neo-republican defence of the nation. The very notion of common culture brings us very close to classical nationalism and it is a well-documented fact that most versions of racism in Europe in the past decades do not focus on origin but upon sharing of a common culture. Sapir is very clear that the formation of a people requires common values: “it is clear that without ‘common value’, a human community cannot constitute a political community” (Sapir 2016, Kindle locations 1542-1544). And here is the problem with this position: How can we define these common values? How we deal with the fact that in class societies these values represent hegemonic strategies? What about the challenge posed by colonialism, both in its past but also in its present in the form of discrimination against former colonial subjects now living in the metropolis.

Moreover, Sapir is very clear that he considers that there is a problem with certain immigrant communities and that he believes that they cannot integrate. He thinks that there is a certain segment of the immigrant youth that shows elements of anomie and their opting of identity reveals the kind of narcissism that Sapir associates with fundamentalism. It is in these terms that he designates multiculturalism as the enemy, in the sense that he thinks that a multiculturalist embracing of heterogeneity undermines the convergence in terms of culture of values that is necessary for the political construction of the people.

There is here a dialectic that we cannot surpass and with which we are condemned to live. If heterogeneity is a state of the political community, its constitution in ‘people for itself’ can only be made by means of a convergence of aspirations and views on the future. This convergence implies a common political culture and this is contradictory with multiculturalism. (Sapir 2016, Kindle locations 873-879).

However, despite Sapir’s attempts to offer a conceptualization of the political construction of the people of popular sovereignty, in the end he opts for a rather classical conception of the Nation, along with the State, as the basis of popular sovereignty, a position that brings us back to all the classical problems associated with a national conception of contemporary societies.

Therefore, the idea of separating the people from the nation and from the State, even if it is necessary from an analytical point of view, is impossible from the point of view of practical result. The people, conceived as political community, have no concrete existence outside the State and the nation, even if it can consciously, but also unconsciously, transform both. There are complex relations between the people, the nation and the State and these relations defy simplifications. The constitution of a people united in its will to live together and to create in common, even if this will may partly be the fruit of institutions that have constructed necessary affects, is indeed the point of obligatory passage without which the constitution of a nation will fail. This is one of the lessons that we must retain from the centrality of the concept of sovereignty. When a population, whatever it is, desires to make something in common, there is sovereignty. But from the moment that this population is heterogeneous, it helps to move certain questions out of the public space. That is why, for many centuries, a necessary alliance pact has been in force between sovereignty and secularism. (Sapir 2016, Kindle locations 2829-2838)

Therefore, in the case of Sapir, from the question of the political construction of the people, we move back to the nation as common culture, history, and language and as the need to exclude from the political (and cultural) space of the people certain cultural or religious reference points, however important they might be for large segments of the subaltern classes of immigrant origin. And in the case of Sapir, this can lead to dangerous political associations, such as his recent insistence to treat the Far Right *Front National* as a potential part of a broader front in favour of sovereignty.

In general, it would be unfair to say that this conception of the secular and democratic nation as the community of the demos is based upon strictly national or racial elements. One might say that most supporters of a neo-republican conception of the nation-State opt for some form of a performative conception of nationhood. For them it is not a question of race, ethnicity or colour, but of the performance of certain cultural and discursive elements that guarantee the unity of the demos: rationalism, secularism, tolerance, multiculturalism and a certain form of feminism. Especially the feminist aspect was particularly important in France, in the support given by mainstream feminism to repressive measures such as the ban on the headscarf in the name of liberation of women, despite the opposition from exactly the subjects supposed to be liberated (Levy 2010; Boggio Éwanjé-Épée and Magliani-Belkacem 2012). However, the end result is the same as with 'typical' racism: a multiplication of forms of exclusion and

an increasing tendency towards treating collective practices, cultures, discourses as inappropriate for democratic participation, as reasons to forbid the participation in the collective political body of the people.

#### 4. *The colonial trauma at the heart of the nation-State*

Moreover, in the debates on secularism, especially in France with all the political confrontations around the notion of *laïcité* we can see the reproduction of elements of a certain Islamophobia and a certain reluctance to deal with the colonial past and its continuous effectivity in order to understand the forms of contemporary racism. The 2003 debate around the question of the scarf brought forward the unease of certain segments of the Left, including some from the anticapitalist Left, with the reality of the cultural referents of subaltern strata of immigrant origin, and the danger that a certain kind of neo-republican defence of secularism and *laïcité* can lead to alliances with systemic political forces. Laurent Lévy (2010) has offered a very powerful account of these debates. It is also important to note that there have also been other important contributions recently to these debates that highlight that the ‘divergences’ in French society that Sapir stressed are not the result of the supposed narcissistic attachment of immigrant youth to fundamentalism but of the actual continuation of colonialism *inside* French society, not only in the form of ideological prejudice but also of real exclusion. Sadri Khiari offers an important account of the history of racism and discrimination in France and how racism was in fact a class political strategy on the part of the dominant classes (Khiari 2009). Moreover, recent developments and anti-racist and anti-colonial struggles have shown that integration is not an attempt towards creating a more open political community but in reality a way to enhance exclusion and separation. It is obvious that we are also dealing here with the fact that, from the very beginning, colonialism was the dark side of the construction of the modern nation-State, especially in Europe, exemplified in the way in which both the war and the liberation of Algeria was perceived in France. In a similar manner, contemporary interventions on the part of radical antiracism especially in France, such as the collective effort of the current associated with the *Parti des Indigènes de la*

*République* (Bouteldja and Khiari 2012), offer an important reminder of the persistence of a neo-colonial form of state-induced racism still active at the heart of the European Project. Moreover, they make it evident that contemporary forms of attacks against the Muslim segments of the working classes of Europe, supposedly in the name of containing ‘radical Islam’, in fact represent class strategies in order to keep them in a very particular condition of subalternity. However, what is most worrying is the tendency by certain segments of the radical Left, including the anticapitalist left, to accept some of the basic tenets of such positions, exemplified in the support of the Left of certain forms of ‘forced emancipation’ in the name of the secular state.

However, the same trauma at the heart of the modern nation-State could also be observed elsewhere. Hannah Arendt, a critical witness to one of the most important recent conscious attempts at nation-building, namely the formation of modern Israel, offered important warnings in the 1940s about the association of popular sovereignty and nationalism, especially in cases where the political establishment of the nation was also based on a founding moment of exclusion and oppression of other people already there (Arendt 2007).

##### *5. Gramsci’s thinking on the national-popular*

So the question remains: is it possible to conceive of some form of recuperation of popular sovereignty, without having to fall back into some form of nationalism or any variety of the political and ideological constructions that tend to reproduce exclusion or neo-colonial exclusion?

One way to deal with this is by a return to Gramsci. Gramsci’s preoccupation with the emergence of what he defined the national-popular will is well known.<sup>7</sup> For Gramsci the “national-popular” collective will represents a form of modern statehood associated with the revolutionary “Jacobin” tradition of the bourgeoisie, an element missing from the emergence of the Italian State, in many instances.

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<sup>7</sup> On the broader notion of the “national-popular” in Gramsci, from literature to politics, see Durante 2009.

One of the first sections must precisely be devoted to the “collective will”, posing the question in the following terms: “When can the conditions for awakening and developing a national-popular collective will be said to exist?” Hence an historical (economic) analysis of the social structure of the given country and a “dramatic” representation of the attempts made in the course of the centuries to awaken this will, together with the reasons for the successive failures. Why was there no absolute monarchy in Italy in Machiavelli’s time? One has to go back to the Roman Empire (the language question, problem of the intellectuals, etc.), and understand the function of the mediaeval Communes, the significance of Catholicism etc. In short, one has to make an outline of the whole history of Italy – in synthesis, but accurate.

The reason for the failures of the successive attempts to create a national-popular collective will is to be sought in the existence of certain specific social groups which were formed at the dissolution of the Communal bourgeoisie; in the particular character of other groups which reflect the international function of Italy as seat of the Church and depositary of the Holy Roman Empire; and so on. [...] An effective *Jacobin* force was always missing, and could not be constituted; and it was precisely such a Jacobin force which in other nations awakened and organised the national-popular collective will, and founded the modern States. (Q 13, §1; *SPN*, pp. 130-131)

However, Gramsci stresses the fact that this kind of formation of the national-popular will represents only a particular ‘revolutionary’ phase of the bourgeoisie and that “[a]ll history from 1815 onwards shows the efforts of the traditional classes to prevent the formation of a collective will of this kind, and to maintain ‘economic-corporate’ power in an international system of passive equilibrium” (Q 13, §1; *SPN*, p. 132).

Gramsci uses the French example and the particular importance of the role of the subaltern classes in the formation of the national-popular will in order to emphasize the absence of such an element in the Italian case. However schematic his conceptualization of the French case might be, the important point lies in his attempt to emphasize the possibilities of alternative forms of formation of the national-popular element, depending upon different national histories.

The works of French historians and French culture in general have been able to develop and become ‘national-popular’ because of the very complexity and variety of French political history in the last 150 years. [...] A unilinear national ‘hagiography’ is impossible: any attempt of this sort appears immediately sectarian, false, utopian, and anti-national because one is forced to cut out or undervalue unforgettable pages of national history (see Maurras’

current line and Bainville's miserable history of France). That is why the permanent element of these political variations, the people-nation, has become the protagonist of French history. Hence a type of political and cultural nationalism that goes beyond the bounds of the strictly nationalist parties and impregnates the whole culture. Hence also a close and dependent relationship between people-nation and intellectuals.

There is nothing of the sort in Italy, where one must search the past by torchlight to discover national feeling, and move with the aid of distinctions, interpretations, and discreet silences. [...] Consequently, in the history of the nineteenth century, there could not have been national unity, since the permanent element, the people-nation, was missing. On the one hand, the dynastic element had to prevail given the support it received from the state apparatus, and the divergent political currents could not have had a shared minimum objective. [...] Due to this position of theirs, the intellectuals had to distinguish themselves from the people, place themselves outside, create or reinforce among themselves a spirit of caste and have a deep *distrust* of the people, feeling them to be foreign, fearing them, because, in reality, the people were something unknown, a mysterious hydra with innumerable heads.

[...] But one must not deny that many steps forward have been taken in every sense: to do so would be to fall into an opposite rhetoric. On the contrary, many intellectual movements, especially before the war, attempted to renew the culture, strip away its rhetoric and bring it nearer to the people, in other words nationalize it. (The two tendencies could be called nation-people and nation-rhetoric.) (Q 3, §82; *CW*, pp. 255-7)

It is interesting to note the distinction that Gramsci makes between nation-people (*popolo-nazione*) and nation-rhetoric, which marks exactly the negative version of nationalism, one that does not incorporate the popular, the subaltern element. The same goes for Gramsci's critique of any conception of the eternity of the nation (an important point taking into consideration the element of a perceived historical continuity in the Italian peninsula). "The preconception that Italy has always been a nation complicates its entire history and requires anti-historical intellectual acrobatics" (Q 3, §82; *CW*, pp. 255-7). Hence, we have Gramsci's denouncement of easy nationalist rhetorical constructions.

This fact is the most peremptory confirmation that in Italy writers are separated from the public and that the public seeks 'its' literature abroad because it feels that this literature is more 'its own' than the so-called national literature. In this fact lies an essential problem of national life. If it is true that each century or fraction of a century has its own literature, it is not always true that this literature is produced in the same national community. Every people has its own literature, but this can come to it from another people, in other

words the people in question can be subordinated to the intellectual and moral hegemony of other peoples. This is often the most strident paradox for many monopolistic tendencies of a nationalistic and repressive character: while they make magnificent hegemonic plans, they fail to realize that they are the object of foreign hegemonies, just as while they make imperialistic plans, they are in fact the object of other imperialisms. (Q 23, §57; *CW*, p. 255)

For Gramsci the national element cannot be identified with the nationalistic element. The national element, regarding culture and ideological production, refers to a particular relation with a national history and a historical / cultural environment not with loyalty to a national group. One might say that it is an analytic not a prescriptive term:

National, in other words, is different from nationalist. Goethe was a German 'national', Stendhal a French 'national', but neither of them was a nationalist. An idea is not effective if it is not expressed in some way, artistically, that is, particularly. But is a spirit particular in as much as it is national? Nationality is a primary particularity, but the great writer is further particularized among his fellow countrymen and this second 'particularity' is not the extension of the first. Renan, as Renan, is by no means a *necessary* consequence of the French spirit. Through his relation to it he is an original event, arbitrary and (as Bergson says) *unpredictable*. And yet, Renan remains French, just as man, while being man, remains animal. But his value, as is true of man, lies precisely in his difference from the group from which he was born.

It is precisely this that the nationalists do not want. For them the value of the masters (great intellectuals) consists in their likeness to the spirit of their group, in their loyalty, in their punctual expression of this spirit (which is, moreover, defined as the spirit of the masters (great intellectuals) so one always ends up being right). (Q 2, §2; *CW*, pp. 260-1)

For Gramsci the national element refers not to some ideal or some form of social essence but rather to the different and specific histories of each social formation, and the different historicities expressed in the particular relations of force that determine the context of each society. Moreover, this is something that has to be taken into account in any attempt to formulate a revolutionary strategy that has to be national, in the sense that the point of departure of any revolutionary project is national, any hegemonic project must take into account these national peculiarities.



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. Consequently, it is necessary to study accurately the combination of national forces which the international class [the proletariat] will have to lead and develop, in accordance with the international perspective and directives [i.e. those of the Comintern<sup>8</sup>]. 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 movement a certain direction, within certain perspectives. (Q 14, §17; *SPN*, p. 240)

Despite the fact that the working class is the only class truly internationalist in scope and in a sense the bearer of a new type of universalism, any strategy for working class hegemony passes through this attention to the national element, this need to ‘nationalize’ itself to a certain extent:

It is in the concept of hegemony that those exigencies which are national in character are knotted together; one can well understand how certain tendencies either do not mention such a concept, or merely skim over it. A class that is international in character has – in as much as it guides social strata which are narrowly national (intellectuals), and indeed frequently even less than national: particularistic and municipalistic (the peasants) – to ‘nationalise’ itself in a certain sense. (Q 14, §17; *SPN*, p. 241)

It is also interesting that Gramsci insisted on the different qualities that a proletarian or popular version of collective will might have, emphasizing the ‘cosmopolitan’ and internationalist elements in the proletarian collective will. In contrast to the attempt by Enrico Corradini to justify nationalism and imperialist expansion on the basis of the character of Italy as “proletarian nation” and Giovanni Pascoli’s hybrid ‘proletarian nationalism’,<sup>9</sup> Gramsci insists on the emancipatory and transformative elements in a potential Italian working class “cosmopolitanism”, enhanced

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<sup>8</sup> “i.e. those of the Comintern” is an explanatory note added by the *SPN* translators [ed.].

<sup>9</sup> On Gramsci’s interest in this attempt towards the construction of a ‘proletarian nationalism’, which coincided with Italian imperial ambitions at the beginning of the twentieth century (leading to the invasion and occupation of Libya in 1911), see the references in the text on the “Southern Question” (Gramsci 1978, p. 450) and in the *Prison Notebooks*: Q 2, §§51 and 52 (*PN1*, p. 295-300).

by the experience of migration and based not upon some abstract universalism but upon the very particular universality of the working class condition, the universality of subalternity. It is this that makes it part of a broader project of social transformation and emancipation.

At present in Italy the element 'man' is either 'man-capital' or 'man-labour'. Italian expansion can only be that of 'man-labour' and the intellectual who represents 'man-labour' is not the traditional intellectual, swollen with rhetoric and literary memories of the past. Traditional Italian cosmopolitanism should become a modern type of cosmopolitanism, one that can assure the best conditions for the development of Italian 'man-labour' in whatever part of the world he happens to be. Not the citizen of the world as *civis romanus* or as Catholic, but as producer of civilization. One can therefore maintain that the Italian tradition is continued dialectically in the working people and their intellectuals, not in the traditional citizen and the traditional intellectual. The Italian people are the people with the greatest 'national' interest in a modern form of cosmopolitanism. Not only the worker but also the peasant, especially the southern peasant. It is in the tradition of the Italian people and Italian history to collaborate in rebuilding the world in an economically unified way not in order to dominate it hegemonically and appropriate the fruit of others' labour but to exist and develop precisely as the Italian people. It can be shown that Caesar is at the source of this tradition. Nationalism of the French stamp is an anachronistic excrescence in Italian history, proper to people who have their heads turned backwards like the damned in Dante. The 'mission' of the Italian people lies in the recovery of Roman and medieval cosmopolitanism, but in its most modern and advanced form. Even indeed a proletarian nation, as Pascoli wanted; proletarian as a nation because it has been the reserve army of foreign capitalism, because together with the Slavic peoples it has given skilled workers to the entire world. For this very reason, it must join the modern front struggling to reorganize also the non-Italian world, which it has helped to create with its labour. (Q 19, §5, p. 1988; *CW*, pp. 246-247)

Gramsci had this conception of the proletariat as the only truly 'national' class – in the sense of achieving a higher form of unity of a society but also with an internationalist scope – already in 1919. In an article in October 1919 in *Ordine Nuovo*, Gramsci insists that:

Today, the 'national' class is the proletariat, and the multitude of the workers and peasants, of Italian working people, who cannot allow the break-up of the nation, because the unity of the State is the form of the organization of production and of exchange constructed by Italian labour, is the patrimony of social wealth that the proletarians want to bring to the Communist International. Only the proletarian State, the proletarian dictatorship, can

today stop the process of dissolution of the national unity (Gramsci 2008, p. 19; originally in “L’Ordine Nuovo”, 4 October 1919).<sup>10</sup>

It is on the basis of this assumption regarding the inability of the bourgeoisie to actually lead the project for the formation of such a national-popular will, that Gramsci assigns this task to the “Modern Prince” the political form of a potential working class hegemony. Here the emergence and formation of national-popular will is linked both to a process of socialist transformation at the economic sphere, but also to “intellectual and moral reform”:

The modern Prince must be and cannot but be the proclaimer and organiser of an intellectual and moral reform, which also means creating the terrain for a subsequent development of the national-popular collective will towards the realisation of a superior, total form of modern civilisation.

These two basic points – the formation of a national-popular collective will, of which the modern Prince is at one and the same time the organiser and the active, operative expression; and intellectual and moral reform – should structure the entire work. The concrete, programmatic points must be incorporated in the first part, that is they should result from the line of discussion “dramatically”, and not be a cold and pedantic exposition of arguments.

Can there be cultural reform, and can the position of the depressed strata of society be improved culturally, without a previous economic reform and a change in their position in the social and economic fields? Intellectual and moral reform has to be linked with a programme of economic reform-indeed the programme of economic reform is precisely the concrete form in which every intellectual and moral reform presents itself. The modern Prince, as it develops, revolutionises the whole system of intellectual and moral relations, in that its development means precisely that any given act is seen as useful or harmful, as virtuous or as wicked, only in so far as it has as its point of reference the modern Prince itself, and helps to strengthen or to oppose it. In men’s consciences, the Prince takes the place of the divinity or the categorical imperative, and becomes the basis for a modern laicism and for a complete laicisation of all aspects of life and of all customary relationships (Q 13, §1; *SPN*, pp. 132-133).

It is important to note that the notion of “moral and intellectual reform”, which Gramsci borrows from but uses beyond its original coinage by Ernest Renan and its reading by Sorel, not only forms an important part of Gramsci’s critique of Croce, but also can be associated with Lenin’s notion of the “cultural revolution”,

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<sup>10</sup> On Gramsci’s thinking on the “national question” see Santoro 2009.

referring to the extent and depth of the intellectual, ideological and cultural transformation that any hegemonic project requires (Frosini 2009; Thomas 2009, p. 420; Rapone 2011, p. 113). Leonardo Rapone, in his detailed study of Gramsci's formative years (1914-1919) has shown that Gramsci from the beginning, faced with various forms of Italian nationalism had this conception of socialism not only as a transformation of the economic structure but also as a profound "intellectual renovation and moral transformation" (Rapone 2011, p. 109) of Italian life. It is obvious that here Gramsci refers to the national popular will being the result of a process of profound economic, social and ideological transformation as part of a socialist strategy and not just the articulation of existing national elements. It is also significant that in the first version of this passage in Q4, §33, instead of people-nation the reference is to people-masses, something that emphasizes that for Gramsci the emergence of the contemporary nation is inextricably linked to the collective practices of the popular masses. Moreover, it stresses the fact that for Gramsci the "nation" in fact refers, to a great extent, to the subaltern classes and in particular the working class.

Now, can we find in Gramsci's writings a way to deal with the challenges associated with questions of popular sovereignty and the potential collective body that would express and implement it? I understand that a possible objection would be that Gramsci dealt with a period when the question was still about recognizing subalternity as part of nationhood, that is of actually unifying the nation and dealing with forms of internal exclusion, exemplified in the Italian case with all the contradictions of the vicissitudes and complexities of the Southern Question [*quistione meridionale*]. However, a closer reading of Gramsci's various references to the Southern Question even in his pre-prison writings suggests that his conception of new process of unification under proletarian leadership was not just about "unity" but also overcoming forms of exclusion that resemble contemporary questions about decolonial struggles.<sup>11</sup> Already in January 1920 Gramsci was insisting that

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<sup>11</sup> And of course there are many references in his writings for his clear support of decolonial struggles. See the following extract from a 1919 *Ordine Nuovo* article: "For several years we Europeans have lived at the expense of the death of the coloured peoples: unconscious vampires that we are, we have fed off their innocent blood. [...] But today flames of revolt are being fanned throughout the colonial world. This is the class struggle of the

The Northern bourgeoisie has subjugated the South of Italy and the Islands, and reduced them to exploitable colonies; by emancipating itself from capitalist slavery, the Northern proletariat will emancipate the Southern peasant masses enslaved to the banks and the parasitic industry of the North. The economic and political regeneration of the peasants should not be sought in a division of uncultivated or poorly cultivated lands, but in the solidarity of the industrial proletariat. This in turn needs the solidarity of the peasantry and has an “interest” in ensuring that capitalism is not re-born economically from landed property; that Southern Italy and the Islands do not become a military base for capitalist counter-revolution (Gramsci 1977, p. 148).

Gramsci elaborates these questions more in his 1926 *Some Aspects of the Southern Question* (Gramsci 1978, pp. 441-462), which deals more with the complexities and difficulties in the creation of this new form of national-popular unity, the role of intellectuals and the questions that would later drive a great part of his elaborations around the concept of hegemony.

At the same time, it is obvious that Gramsci’s writings dealt with another conjuncture which, to a certain extent, justifies Stefan Kipfer and Gillian Hart’s assessment that Gramsci is “both vital and insufficient to approach anti- and post-colonial nationalisms” (Kipfer and Hart 2013, p. 335). I would also agree with Kipfer and Hart on the need to ‘stretch’ Gramsci beyond whatever ‘Eurocentric’ limitations his view had, into questions of “‘race’ and ethnicity, as well as sexuality and gender” (Kipfer and Hart 2013, p. 332) and into a dialogue with the work of Fanon, since “[l]ike Gramsci, Fanon saw organic intellectuals as organizers whose leadership grows out of and constantly returns to the common and good sense of subaltern life” (Kipfer and Hart 2013, p. 333).<sup>12</sup>

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coloured peoples against their white exploiters and murderers. It is the vast irresistible drive towards autonomy and independence of a whole world, with all its spiritual riches” (Gramsci 1977, pp. 59-60). See also the following passage, again from a 1920 *Ordine Nuovo* article: “In this way the colonial populations become the foundation on which the whole edifice of capitalist exploitation is erected. These populations are required to donate the whole of their lives to the development of industrial civilization. For this they can expect no benefit in return; indeed, they see their own countries systematically despoiled of their natural resources, i.e. of the necessary conditions for their own autonomous development.” (Gramsci 1977, p. 302).

<sup>12</sup> In a similar tone, Ato Sekyi-Otu has suggested that “I am tempted to call Gramsci a precocious Fanonist. A Fanonist reading of Gramsci would indeed locate the historical conditions of possibility of the ‘popular-national’ as project of the modern prince in his portrait of the arrested development of the Italian bourgeoisie, the poverty of what he calls (again prefiguring Fanon) its ‘national consciousness’, its twin cultural vices of cosmopolitanism and narcissism, its historical inability to summon the oppressed of the

Yet I would like to insist that, despite certain blind spots in his thinking, Gramsci remains more pertinent in these contemporary debates, exactly because he suggested a redefinition of the *popolazione* based upon the determining inclusion and influence of the subaltern classes, of the popular masses. In a certain manner, this remains the case today.

#### *6. Reconstructing the people*

Therefore, I would suggest that the only way to rethink the possibility of reclaiming popular sovereignty in a manner that does avoid the pitfalls of both cosmopolitan universalism and exclusionist nationalism is by means of a redefinition of the people based upon the contemporary condition of subalternity in the context of contemporary capitalist accumulation, which in fact has expanded the linkages between subalternity and the subjection to capitalist accumulation, in both direct and indirect ways. This implies a redefinition of the people that delinks it from ethnicity, origin or common history and instead links it to common condition, present and struggle. It is a rather scissionist conception of the people because it also includes an oppositional approach to the ‘enemies of the people’, many of them nominally ‘members of the nation’. Frédéric Lordon has offered a sufficiently provocative description of this transformative and emancipatory conception of the people, in terms of what he defines as the new landscape of the nation, one which includes also this conception that not everyone can belong to the people...

Here is the new landscape of nationality: Bernard Arnault? Not French. Cahuzac? Not French. Johnny and Depardieu who wander around the world like a self-service shop for passports? Not French. The Mamadous and the Mohammeds that toil in sweatshops, that do the work that no one else wants to do and pay their taxes are a thousand times more French than this race of masters. The blue-bloods of tax evasion, out! Passport and welcome to all the dark-coloured people are dwelling on this territory, those that have contributed twice, by their labour and their taxes to collective life, a double

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countryside onto the stage of national regeneration. [...] Without a doubt, the conceptual supports of Fanon’s vision of the national, the social and the revolutionary as cognate terms of a new political practice, have an elective affinity with Gramsci’s philosophy of praxis and its political implications.” (Sekyi-Otu 1996, pp. 118-119).

contribution that gives its own unique criterion to the belonging to what, yes, continues to be called a nation! (Lordon 2013)

It is obvious that we need a conception of the people that is post-national and de-colonial. I would like to insist that we can have a political conception or more exactly a *politically performative* conception of the people and of – to use Gramscian terminology – the people-nation. We are no longer dealing with the ‘imaginary community’ of ‘common blood’; it is the unity in struggle of the subaltern classes, the unity of those that share the same problems, the same misery, the same hope, the same struggles. The people are not a common origin; they represent a common condition and perspective. It is an antagonistic conception of the nation that also demands a ‘decolonialization’ of the nation, as recognition of the consequences of colonialism and state racism, the struggle against all forms of racism within a potential alliance of the subaltern classes. And in this sense such a construction of the people is by itself a terrain of social and political antagonism. In the words of Stuart Hall,

The capacity to *constitute* classes and individuals as a popular force – that is the nature of political and cultural struggle: to *make* the divided classes and the separated peoples – divided and separated by culture as much as by other factors – *into* a popular-democratic cultural force. (Hall 1998, pp. 452-453)

Institutionally, it is based upon the offering of full political rights and not just ‘rights of hospitality’, to everyone living and working in a given territory. Culturally it answers the dangers of predefined cultural norms and values with a conception of democratic political culture as constant reconstruction and constant ‘work in progress’.

I have stressed the element of the struggle against racism in all its form as an important aspect of this (re)construction of people. In contemporary societies, where racial divisions inside the working class are becoming more important, the challenge of overcoming racism is not just about unity of the working and popular masses. As Jacques Rancière has suggested, the crucial aspect is the identification with the cause of the other as a constituent moment of the production of the people. Writing about the importance of the movement against the French State’s war in Algeria as a crucial aspect of political subjectification, he

insists that the crucial step was the dis-identification with the French State that was responsible for repression, including the infamous 17 October 1961 police murders of more than 100 Algerian protesters in Paris. This process of dis-identification with the State and the identification with the cause of the other is “the production of a *people* that is different from the people that is seen, talked, counted by the State, a people defined by the manifestation of a harm made to the constitution of a common, which constructs by itself another space of community” (Rancière 1997, p. 43).

In this sense, following Deleuze we are talking about a people that is missing, a people that has to be produced, a people-to-come, “[n]ot the myth of a past people, but the story-telling of the people to come. The speech-act must create itself as a foreign language in a dominant language, precisely in order to express an impossibility of living under domination” (Deleuze 1989, p. 223).

#### 7. *From the popolo-nazione to the historical bloc*

Consequently, we must return to Gramsci and his strategic and transformative conception that links the popolo-nazione and a potential historical bloc:

If the relationship between intellectuals and people-nation, between the leaders and the led, the rulers and the ruled, is provided by an organic cohesion in which feeling-passion becomes understanding and thence knowledge (not mechanically but in a way that is alive), then and only then is the relationship one of representation. Only then can there take place an exchange of individual elements between the rulers and ruled, leaders [*dirigenti*] and led, and can the shared life be realised which alone is a social force with the creation of the “historical bloc” (Q 11, §67; *SPN*, p. 418).

Now this conception of the historical bloc points to something more complex than the formation of the people by means of a process of signification that creates both a common identity and an opposition to a common ‘enemy’, however important such aspects are for this re-emergence of the people as the collective agent of transformation and emancipation. When dealing with the particular problems posed by the need to create new forms of popular unity between the different segments of the subaltern classes and groups divided as they are by ethnic or religious lines, but also by the institutional division between citizens and migrants as well as undocumented migrants, more important than the common



‘cultural referents’ are the collective practices, demands, strategies, re-writings of histories, understandings of each other, and – above all – common aspirations, that can indeed induce the common identification as people. This process also requires concrete struggles for the institutional forms that enable this convergence, especially full social and political rights, but also the forms of political organizing and mass political intellectuality that link this common condition to common hegemonic projects of transformation and emancipation and help the articulation of common struggles and alliances. In sum, it is what Gramsci tried to define as the “Modern Prince”, the political form of a modern United Front.

Moreover, the people are not just a ‘discursive’ construction, in the sense of an arbitrary articulation of disparate elements into a temporary form of coherence. Our conception of the people is based upon class analysis and the potential for alliances of the subaltern classes. Following Poulantzas we can say the people is a “concept for strategy”,<sup>13</sup> that today points to the direction of an actual social alliance, formed as a result of the evolution of the contemporary forms of capitalist accumulation that create ‘objective’ material conditions that bring together working class strata with new petty bourgeois strata (in the Poulantzian sense), state employees and even segments of the traditional petty-bourgeois strata as a result of the inability of contemporary neoliberal policies to enhance a lasting historical bloc around finance and multinational capitals, and the new forms of precariousness, flexibility and over-exploitation that have been intensified against both manual and intellectual labour. This indeed creates common demands and interests, based upon the common condition of labour, precariousness, unemployment, exploitation, increased difficulty in dealing with basic needs that, in a certain manner, unite the undocumented migrant with the young degree holder moving from unemployment into precarious part-time work

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<sup>13</sup> “The articulation of the structural determination of classes and of class positions within a social formation, the locus of existence of conjunctures, requires particular concepts. I shall call these *concepts of strategy*, embracing in particular such phenomena as class polarization and class alliance. Among these, on the side of the dominant classes, is the concept of the ‘power bloc’, designating a specific alliance of dominant classes and fractions; also, on the side of the dominated classes, the concept of the ‘people’, designating a specific alliance of these classes and fractions.” (Poulantzas 1975, p. 24).

and back into unemployment. Moreover, all these segments share the same contradiction running through contemporary capitalism: the fact that the contemporary labour force is at the same time more precarious, more insecure, more subject to forms of systemic violence, more fragmented, but also more in possession of those intellectual and communicative skills to realize its role as producer of social wealth and also to articulate demands and grievances (a comparison between the communication strategies of modern grass-root movements and certain aspects of the ingenuity of collective resistances by refugees and undocumented migrants can be really illuminating on this subject). Moreover, all these have also taken actual collective forms of ‘encounters’ between the different segments of a potential ‘people’ in contemporary movements.

Such a perspective poses important challenges regarding the hegemonic aspects of such a strategy. They pose the need to rethink the question of re-creating the collective subject of emancipation to look directly at the traumas linked to oppression and colonialism and to reconfigure, as Houria Bouteldja has suggested, the ‘we’ of a new political identity to be collectively invented.<sup>14</sup> They require a certain encounter between different currents, not only in the sense of political differences but also of the differences created by the reproduction of the colonial condition inside European States. Sadri Khiari posits this exigency when he calls for the construction of a “decolonial majority, which will be constituted by an alliance between indigenous political forces and non-indigenous decolonial political forces” or when he calls for a

politics of hegemony inside the French white population, a cultural, moral, ideological politics in order to be, one day, conceivable that there are inside the white political forces decolonial composing elements that will be based upon a broad consensus inside the population (Bouteldja and Khiari (eds) 2012, p. 394).

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<sup>14</sup> “We are the sum of our acts of cowardice and of our resistances. We will be what we will be worthy to be. That’s all. This is true for all of us, whites or blacks. It is there that the question of the big WE will be posed. The We of our encounter, the We of the surpassing of race and its abolition, the We of a new political identity that we must invent together, the We of the decolonial majority. [...] This will be the We of a revolutionary love” (Bouteldja 2016, pp. 139-140).

In a like manner it is interesting to note his suggestions on how the movements of what he defines as “indigenous” (namely the former colonial subjects living as citizens or migrants in European states) can contribute to the broader redefinition of movements of emancipation.

[T]he French Indigenous but also non indigenous population suffers a degradation not only of its economic conditions of life but also of its entire life environment, a destruction of cultures, of popular knowledges, of traditions, of citizenship, of many social links, problems that cannot be resolved simply by the nationalisation of the means of production and by planification, either statist or self-managed. To these questions, which are complicated questions, I think that the indigenous are maybe more in position than the left or the far left to find answers, to the extent that these are questions that are being directly posed to them because they are the fundamental forms of racialisation (Bouteldja and Khiari (eds.) 2012, 396-397).

And it is here that we find the importance of solidarity and solidarity movements to refugees, especially forms that attempt to create common spaces and practices of solidarity, such as self-managed forms of hospitality that combine an immediate answer to a humanitarian crisis with struggles that treat refugees as collective subjects and not simply ‘victims’. The example of the self-managed Plaza Hotel in Athens and other self-managed centres that offer forms of hospitality to refugees is one such example. The same goes for all forms of common struggle across Europe, all attempts to create new alliances based upon a common condition of subalternity. From struggles for the rights of migrant labour to initiatives such as the ‘March for Dignity’ in France, these are all aspects of an attempt to ‘create people’.

It is also important to note that this conception of the people in terms of a potential new “historical bloc”, in sharp contrast to both a certain version of ‘multiculturalism’<sup>15</sup> that treats societies as simple aggregations of individuals and differences but also to the neo-republican version of the people as common history and shared values. It points to a people to be created, it accepts all the referents of subaltern classes as necessarily contradictory elements of a people to come, of a “national-popular” element that has yet

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<sup>15</sup> Especially since, as Himani Bannerji (2000) has suggested, a certain version of multiculturalism can be fully compatible with neoliberalism.

to be constructed, in a constant process of reconstruction / reproduction / renewal. Above all, it is a conception of the construction of the people that does not put class antagonism into brackets: rather, it takes it as a starting point.

All this suggests that simply thinking about the rights of those not included in the nation, however important this might be, is not enough, because it does not challenge the current erosion of both democracy and popular sovereignty as part of very specific social and political strategies that enhance developments such as European Integration. Moreover, an emphasis upon rights, without a challenge of European Integration can lead either to the fruitless pursuit of inscribing those rights within the institutional framework of 'Fortress-Europe', in a phase when the opposite is more probable, or to various forms of compromises, such the current distinctions between 'refugees' and 'migrants'. And the answer to this impasse cannot be the invocation of a utopian 'global' right to nomadic movement – however important it is to guarantee full social and political rights to anyone living and working in a country – exactly because, as in the former case, it does not point to the actual political forms than can account both for the defence of these rights but also for the possibility to really struggle against racism by creating the kind of antagonistic political body that would re-signify both democracy and social transformation. In contrast, the choice of reclaiming popular sovereignty, in the form of ruptures with international institutional forms that undermine democracy, such as the EU and the Eurozone, along with demanding full rights and citizenship for anyone living and working in a country (and in general contributing to its collective social life), indeed offers an alternative, creating conditions for a broader process of trans-formation. It is exactly the prospect of social transformation, a common future instead of a common history or origin that creates a different antagonistic (and agonistic) form of 'popular unity'.<sup>16</sup> In this sense, a renewed socialist perspective, along the lines of such an emergence of a new historical bloc, is both a potential outcome and a necessary condition of dealing with the new forms of exclusion that emerge.

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<sup>16</sup> "Our politics must sidestep the paradigm of 'unity' based on 'fragmentation or integration' and instead engage in struggles based on the genuine contradictions of our society." (Bannerji 2000, p. 120).

And it is here that we can find the basis of a new inter-nationalism, new forms of cooperation and solidarity. Solidarity inside a country is the condition for solidarity abroad; a different social and political configuration is the condition for a different 'foreign policy'.

Consequently, it is exactly the emergence of a new historical bloc than can actually give a different meaning to sovereignty, linking it to social transformation and emancipation, basing it upon a strategy to actually fight racism and neocolonialism and transforming into a form of a potentially revolutionary 'general will', representing the democratic instance that is at the heart of communism as a material tendency.

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# The Economic-Political Crisis in Brazil: a Reading from Some Reflections of Gramsci

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# The Economic-Political Crisis in Brazil: a Reading from Some Reflections of Gramsci

## Abstract

*The Economic-Political Crisis in Brazil: a Reading from Some Reflections of Gramsci*

## Abstract

Since the nineteen sixties, Gramsci has been one of the main authors inspiring the renewal of Marxism, the resistance of popular movements to the military dictatorship, and the formation of political organizations in the process of democratization in Brazil. Various of his categories, such as “passive revolution”, “transformism”, the “expanded State”, “war of movement/war of position”, “national-popular”, “hegemony” etc., have often served as a basis for interpreting the history and politics of Brazil. But, in his writings there is also a set of reflections that depict situations which are much closer to the economic and political crisis currently affecting Brazil. Among other aspects, in fact, Gramsci’s work, written between the two great wars of the last century, is characterized by the analysis of the “organic crisis” of bourgeois society, by the search for the reasons of the defeat of the revolutionary movement, and by the new possibilities opened to the “subaltern classes” in crucial historical circumstances. In the light of this background, in these few pages we will discuss the current political situation of Brazil taking into account especially the *Observations on Certain Aspects of the Structure of Political Parties in Periods of Organic Crisis* (Q13, § 23, pp. 1602-1613; SPN, pp. 210-218 and concluding part on pp. 167-168) and on the modern forms of *Caesarism* (Q13, § 27, pp. 1619-1622; SPN, pp. 219-222)\*.

\* Gramsci, A., *Quaderni del carcere*, ed. V. Gerratana, Torino, Einaudi, 1975. In the body of the text, this edition is quoted as QC, followed by the number of the notebook, the number of the paragraph (where necessary also the sub-paragraph) and page of the Italian edition, data which allow quotations to be located in the Brazilian and other integral editions. Page references are also given to English translations (SPN for Gramsci 1971; PN, vols. I, II and III for Gramsci 1992, 1996 and 2007 respectively; and FSPN for Gramsci 1995).

## Keywords

Gramsci, Bonapartism, Organic Crisis, Political and Economic Crisis, Brazil, Lulism

# *The Economic-Political Crisis in Brazil: a Reading from Some Reflections of Gramsci*

Giovanni Semeraro

## *1. The end of a political cycle*

In June 2013, on the eve of the Confederations Cup, huge demonstrations broke out in Brazil occupying squares and streets in over 300 cities and uncovering the deep crisis latent in the country. On posters, slogans and in the symbology used, demonstrators expressed their anger at the reduction in the country's growth rate and at basic demands never being met, while large investments were made in overpriced projects to ensure the world that the football extravaganza orchestrated by FIFA (*Fédération Internationale de Football Association*) *would actually take place*. Triggered by social networks in a 'spontaneous' and apparently chaotic way, those mass mobilizations, expressing various forms of dissent, claimed the 'Fifa standard' for public services and protested against corruption, precarious work and the loss of purchasing power. The sudden explosion, which drew into its vortex a multiplicity of even opposing interests and a mix of social groups, was, in fact, the expression of "a whole series of questions which [had] piled up in a molecular form" (*QC* 15, § 59, p. 1824; *SPN*, p. 106)<sup>1</sup> in a country whose government no longer represented an aggregating and consensual project. A very similar picture is portrayed by Gramsci when he describes aspects of the "organic crisis" which occurs

1) because the previously passive great masses went into motion, but it was chaotic, disorganized motion, without leadership, that is, without a precise collective political will; 2) because [...] the middle classes [...] found themselves unemployed, precisely after having completed their apprenticeship in positions of authority etc.; 3) because the antagonistic forces turned out to be incapable of organizing the actual disorder to their advantage (*QC* 7, § 80, pp. 912-913; *PN*, Vol. III, p. 211).

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<sup>1</sup> The *SPN* translation is modified to take account of the importance that "molecularly" has attained in Gramsci and Gramscian studies [editorial note].

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Taken by surprise and stunned, authorities sought to circumvent popular revolt, at first with repression but later metabolizing a few demands with palliative measures and generic promises of reform. Without seeing any real effect, pressures started up again after the 2014 elections. Since the end of 2014, in fact, when Dilma Rousseff, from the Workers Party (*Partido dos Trabalhadores* – PT), was re-elected President of the Republic with a very slim majority of the popular vote, society clearly revealed its division and people slowly began to realize the gravity of the crisis that had hit Brazil. The dramatic economic and political situation was compounded by the numerous cases of corruption revealed by “Operation Car Wash” (*Operação Lava-Jato*), triggered by the Federal Police and the Public Ministry when they discovered a ‘kickback’ scheme in Petrobras, a strategic state-owned company due to its high earnings and investments.

An impressive list of politicians of various parties (including ministers and chairmen of the Chamber of Deputies and the Senate) and of government officials, bribed by major construction companies and private firms, shocked the population, putting on display not only the climate of impunity prevailing in the country and the frightening hole in the government’s coffers, but, above all, the predatory culture that rages in many sectors of society and the lack of an effective democracy on account of the strength of large economic groups. In the same period, “Operation Zelotes”, promoted by the Brazilian Internal Revenue Service (*Receita Federal*), the Federal Police, the Federal Public Prosecutor’s Office and the Internal Affairs Office of the Ministry of Treasury, unveiled a tax evasion scheme which initially amounted to over 20 billion Brazilian *real* (in round terms now between 5 and 6 billion euros or US dollars), defrauded at the Administrative Tax Appeals Council (*Conselho Administrativo de Recursos Fiscais* – CARF), where reduction services were sold or the debt of banks and large companies (such as, for example, Santander, Bradesco, Gerdau, RBS – affiliate of *Rede Globo* etc) disappeared. In addition to this, Wikileaks disclosed information on secret accounts in the Swiss branch of HSBC Bank, which included the names of 8667 Brazilians, alleged to have stolen considerable amounts from the country in undeclared currency.

The PT, involved in corruption scandals, won a fourth term with the aid of much electoral juggling, but saw this result become a

“Pyrrhic victory”. To ensure a minimum of governability, in fact, the government of the President was required to set up a harsh fiscal adjustment, completely contradicting its campaign promises, and to make huge concessions to the allied parties, most of which had positions totally against its program. In this way, with the Presidency of the Chamber of Deputies and the Senate in the hands of the PMDB (now numerically the largest party), the basis of the parliamentary support started to vote opportunistic and reactionary guidelines, which further deepened the crisis that was devastating the country. But, the greatest disaster suffered by the PT has been the loss of credibility in the larger sectors of society, the dropout of many militants, popular organizations and intellectuals frustrated by the lack of consistency and distortion of the party. For somewhat more than a couple of years, then, it has not constituted a hegemonic force in the country capable of aggregating consent, giving unity and political direction to the nation, a situation which has therefore led to the creation of a dangerous vacuum that generates uncertainty, social disarray and rise of adventurists and predators. Taking advantage of the “crisis of command and leadership when spontaneous consent undergoes a crisis” (*QC* 4, § 49, p. 476; *PN* Vol. II, p. 201), the massive advances of financial capital, business and the right-wing media – upset by the fourth defeat in elections and by social spending, launched relentless attacks in order to disqualify the PT and (successfully) demand the resignation and impeachment of now ex-President Rousseff. After having taken this risky path, which may be considered as representing one of institutional rupture and a “white coup”, the opposition forces continued to make the PT-led government bleed by imposing a harsh neoliberal agenda on it, with the intention of paving the way for an overwhelming victory in the next elections, the recent municipal ones of autumn 2016, and in the state and national elections, in 2018.

It is also to be noted that, in recent years, the situation in Brazil has been worsening due to the long period of drought which has affected agriculture and the water system of strategic regions, in addition to a set of external factors, such as the world economic crisis, protectionism practiced by the United States and the European Union, the reduction of growth in China and Russia and the disintegration of trading partners in the Middle East and Africa.

To these ingredients one must add the contraction of leftist parties that is occurring around the world and the wearing down of progressive governments in Latin America, articulated around projects such as MERCOSUR, UNASUR, CELAC, ALBA and contrary to the interests of the United States. Although significant, however, these factors do not exempt the PT from responsibilities regarding mistakes in political strategy and economy management, accommodation, omission, engagement in acts of corruption and the apparatus of the State conducted by it. A political agglutination that has marked the history of Brazil over the last 35 years, which now can no longer “[...] really causes the whole society to move forward, not merely satisfying its own existential requirements, but continuously augmenting its cadres for the conquest of every new sphere of economic and productive activity” (*QC* 19, § 24, p. 2012; *SPN*, p. 60). In this way, if the bureaucracy “feels itself independent of the mass of members, the party ends up by becoming anachronistic and at moments of acute crisis it is voided of its social content and left as though suspended in mid-air” (*QC* 13, § 23, p. 1604; *SPN*, p. 211). Today, in fact, it is practically unanimous to consider that the cycle of the PT, dominated by corporatism and entrenched in the remnants of governmental power, is heading towards decline because it lost the ability to create an “[...] organic unity between theory and practice, between intellectual strata and popular masses, between rulers and ruled” (*QC* 13, § 36, p. 1635, *SPN*, p. 190). In 1930, in the fascist prison, Gramsci warned that

Ignoring and, even worse, disdaining the so-called ‘spontaneous’ movements – that is declining to give them a conscious leadership and raise them to a higher level by inserting them into politics – may often have very bad and serious consequences. It is almost always the case that a ‘spontaneous’ movement of the subaltern classes is matched by a reactionary movement of the right wing of the dominant class, for concomitant reasons: an economic crisis, for example, produces, on the one hand, discontent among the subaltern classes and spontaneous mass movements and, on the other, conspiracies by reactionary groups, who take advantage of the objective enfeeblement of the government to attempt coups d’état. Among the efficient causes of these coups d’état, one must include the failure of the responsible groups to give conscious leadership to the spontaneous rebellions and thus enable them to become a positive political factor. (*QC* 3, § 48, p. 331; *PN*, Vol. II, p. 51; alternative wording in *SPN*, p. 199).

After 2003, when it won the Presidency of the Republic and the government of important cities and states of the country, the PT started to consolidate itself in power thanks to a favourable external economic environment and to the social programs that ensured its popular support. Even in the years of the major crisis that exploded in the world in 2008, countercyclical internal measures managed to avoid the erosion of wages and jobs. But, throughout its mandates, the party, which from its formation had been noted for its “new way of doing politics”, and for a unique process of popular participation, gradually lost these features, took it easy and adopted ambiguous positions. In fact, leading a contradictory administration, it sought to promote the public by favouring private interests; multiplied paternalistic policies and at the same time made the élite richer and facilitated huge profits for banks; boosted the primary exporter sector with a large production of commodities at the cost of a high degree of pollution and intensive use of pesticides; appeased the misery of the most abandoned sectors with “*bolsas*” programs, raised the minimum wage, opened credit lines and access to the university. It did not however reduce inequality since it avoided substantial transformations, namely agrarian and urban reforms, fiscal and political reforms, audit of the government debt and of the financial system, media democratization and fair distribution of the wealth produced collectively. Without fighting the mechanisms that reproduce the concentration of wealth and without promoting an “intellectual and moral reform” of the popular classes such as to place them in a position to exercise their sovereignty, it is not possible to reach an effectively fair and democratic society.

The sovereignty of a country, in fact, consists not only in fighting poverty, in increasing production and in having citizens functional to the system, but depends essentially on the promotion of self-government and the socialization of politics and common assets – the most fundamental of all rights – without which a people cannot be a free and respectable subject. This is the deepest sense that Gramsci gives to democracy when he defines it as the system that must promote the transition of citizens from their condition of ruled to rulers, from the position of governed to governors (*QC* 8, § 191, p. 1056; *PN*, Vol. III, p. 345).

When it became reconciled to social and economic groups with no national-popular commitment and promoted developmental projects to achieve “what is possible within the capitalist model” (Boito, 2012), the PT administration continued to allow the concentration of wealth and land in the hands of a few, to indiscriminately throw the doors open for investors and imports, and somewhat strangely, to increase the debt on its checking account due to an absurd primary surplus that set stratospheric interest rates and introduced one of the most perverse mechanisms of transfer of income from labor to financial speculation.

Indeed, both the conciliatory government of Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva (2003-2010) and the managerial centralism of Dilma Vana Rousseff (2011-2016), which even tried (unsuccessfully) to reduce interest rates and bank profits (Singer, 2015, pp. 47 et seq.), gave in to the typical formula of “class coexistence”, which does not compromise the socio-economic structure, and to the “miscegenation” of the politics that characterizes the history of Brazil. This is a phenomenon that the leading sociologist Francisco de Oliveira portrays as the production of a “platypus” (the “ornitorrinco” of Oliveira’s 2003 volume) since it seeks to combine savage capitalism with paternalistic social benefits, ensures the controlled reproduction of inequality and naturalizes the contradictions of a “left which governs with its right hand”. However, to reach governmental power with the popular vote and then to continue to reproduce the current system is fatal to the left. In this sense, “Lulism” (Singer, 2012) and the transformation of its government in a state-Bonapartist party (cf. *QC* 3, § 119, p. 387; *PN*, Vol. II. pp. 105-106) led to a separation between political society and civil society, a demobilization of the popular movements and to an “illusory conciliation” of antagonistic interests rather than to a “passive revolution in the Brazilian way”.

Gramsci, in fact, even when he acknowledges the occurrence of “molecular changes” or “modifications” (*QC* 15, § 11, 1767; *SPN*, p. 109) and of “relatively ‘progressive’” elements (*QC*, 14, §23; *SPN*, p. 223) in processes of “passive revolution”, leaves no doubt when he refers to the attempts to reconcile the irreconcilable. Such tests, indeed, are

non-organic creations, because they are contradictory, because they are intended to reconcile opposed and contradictory interests; their ‘historicity’

will be brief because contradiction appears after each event of which they have been the instrument. The philosophy of praxis, on the other hand, does not aim at the peaceful resolution of existing contradictions in history and society but is rather the very theory of these contradictions. It is not the instrument of government of the dominant groups in order to gain the consent of and exercise hegemony over the subaltern classes; it is the expression of these subaltern classes who want to educate themselves in the art of government and have an interest in knowing all truths, even the unpleasant ones, and in avoiding the (impossible) deceptions of the upper class and – even more – their own (*QC* 10, Part II, § 41XII, p. 1319-1320; *FSPN*, pp. 395-396).

An alert in this direction had been released by, among others, Carlos Nelson Coutinho when, in 1999, in view of the ongoing crisis, he called attention to the difference between “social democratic reformism” tamed by the established order and

a reformist-revolutionary strategy that will maintain the overcoming of capitalism as an objective, devising socialism as the ultimate goal of a *historic era* marked by profound and progressive structural reforms (Coutinho, 2000, p. 116).

## 2. *Reasons for the crisis*

Regardless of the analysis that will be drawn from the PT government, the fact is that Brazil which, between 2004 and 2012 showed an annual growth rate of 5% asserting itself as the fifth world economy, is now facing a bitter recession of 3%, an inflation rate of 10%, an unemployment rate that rose from 9% to 11.9% (year-end to year-end 2015-2016), a currency devaluation of over 50% against the dollar and the closure of many industries, which has led to disastrous consequences for the population previously animated by the hopes of a reduction of poverty and of better living conditions. The situation in Brazil has become even more dramatic as, on the one hand, we see the exhaustion of the political hegemony of the PT and, on the other hand, it seems that there is no other political power or leadership able to promote “the fusion of an entire social group under a single leadership, which alone is held to be capable of solving an over-riding problem of its existence and fending off a mortal danger” (*QC* 13, § 23, p. 1604;



*SPN*, p. 211).<sup>2</sup> Thus, while in the population disbelief in politics and disappointment with regard to the parties has been spreading, “[...] the old is dying and the new cannot be born: in this interregnum, morbid phenomena the most varied kind occur” (*QC* 3, § 34, p. 311; *PN* Vol. II, p. 33). This represents a more dangerous situation, as Gramsci notes in Notebook 4 (in a so-called “A” text, i.e. a first draft, of 1930), since

it spreads to all the political parties and among all the different classes; [...]. The crisis is dangerous when the rank and file of one or more parties does not go over very quickly to another party that better epitomizes the general interest. (*QC* 4, § 69, p. 513; *PN*, Vol. II, p. 241).

A few years later, in the second draft (a “C” text) recorded in one of the “special” notebooks (*Q* 13, § 23: 1932-1934),<sup>3</sup> as though he were describing the situation underway in Brazil, Gramsci remarks that

At a certain point in their historical lives, social groups become detached from their traditional parties. In other words, the traditional parties, in that particular organisational form, with the particular men who constitute, represent and lead them, are no longer recognized by their class (or fraction of a class) as its expression. When such crises occur, the immediate situation becomes delicate and dangerous, because the field is open for violent solutions, for the activities of unknown forces represented charismatic “men of destiny” [...]. In every country the process is different, although the content is the same. And the content is the crisis of the ruling class’s hegemony,

unable as it is, to meet the expectations of the popular masses which

put forward demands which taken altogether, albeit not organically formulated, add up to a revolution (*QC*, § 13, pp. 1602-1603; *SPN*, p. 210).

The disaggregation of a party that has catalysed the country’s renewal and has united much of the popular movements over the last few decades, along with the uneasiness also observed in many

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<sup>2</sup> Here again the translation is brought into line with the *QC* original by substituting “group” for *SPN*’s “class” [editorial note].

<sup>3</sup> The dating of Notebook 13 is notoriously difficult; even Gianni Francioni, editor of the anastatic version of the Notebooks (Gramsci 2009, Vol. 14, p. 154), has been unable to date its paragraphs to more exactly than mid-1932 to November 1933 [editorial note].

union organizations associated with the allied United Workers' Center (*Central Única dos Trabalhadores* – CUT), has been skilfully exploited by conservative forces to unleash a new offensive of capital aimed at enlarging the regime of precariousness and increasing outsourcing and cuts in public services. In this way, if in the past decade, in the reflux of neoliberal policies in Latin America, the PT was useful to the interests of the bourgeoisie to control the growing wave of popular mobilizations, now, the economic crisis, which has been weakening the party, has become the best excuse to get rid of a party whose organization and continuity, even with its ambiguities, represents a threat and a burden to the free action of the economic power and to the advancement of a reactionary wave in Brazil and in Latin America. In this very delicate and unpredictable process,

[t]he crisis creates situations which are dangerous in the short run, since the various strata of the population are not all capable of orienting themselves equally swiftly. The traditional ruling class, which has numerous trained cadres, changes men and programmes and, with greater speed than is achieved by the subaltern classes, reabsorbs the control that was slipping from its grasp” (*QC* 13, § 23, p. 1603; *SPN*, p. 210).

And in fact, what is going on in Brazil is not exactly a power vacuum as many analysts argue, because a vacuum does not exist, much less in politics. Representatives of finance capital, of international corporations and large companies, federations of industry and commerce and the corporate media, with their poses as scholars and saviours, started to directly occupy key posts in the government (Treasury, Planning, Agriculture, Mines and Energy, Industry and Trade, Science and Technology, Health etc.) and to impose a fiscal adjustment aimed at ensuring that the primary surplus was intended to pay bankers and speculators in public debt securities, to downgrade salaries, to relax the Consolidation of Labour Laws (*Consolidação das Leis do Trabalho* – CLT), to commercialize social rights and to install a ‘minimum State’.

Although every country and every historical circumstance show different processes, we can also find precious elements to better understand what has been taking place in Brazil in Gramsci's reflections on “Caesarism”, a phenomenon which can be said to “express a situation in which the forces in conflict balance each

other in a catastrophic manner” (QC 13, § 27, p. 1619; SPN, p. 219) and cancel each other, giving rise to a situation of ‘ungovernability’ that paves the way for an “solution by ‘arbitrage’” (*loc. cit.*),<sup>4</sup> by the intervention of technicians and professionals from large financial institutions specialized in ‘cleaning up’, and which are ‘free’ of ideological influences – as if it were possible to separate economy from politics. Currently, indeed, the developmental project has no political and social forces strong enough on which to support itself, but the ‘adjustment’ policies are also meeting with resistance in society. This lack of definition, in which “no group, neither the conservatives nor the progressives, has the strength for victory” (QC 13, § 23, p. 1604; SPN, p. 211), and the lack of an alternative political pole, favor the growth of a particular form of “Caesarism” in Brazil. The need to implement ‘urgent’ measures of austerity that could put the country ‘back on track’ has created a ‘state of exception’ situation, enabling the approval of regressive projects, paralyzing political action and putting the population in a painful standby position. Moving away from “the assessment made by Marx in his celebrated *18 Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte*” (Liguori, 2009, p. 124), as well as the classic examples of “Caesarism” manifested in the figures of Caesar and Napoleon (“progressive” Caesarism) or of Napoleon III and Bismarck (“reactionary Caesarism”), Gramsci notes that “In the modern world, with its great economic-trade-union and party-political coalitions, the mechanism of the Caesarist phenomenon is different from what it was up to Napoleon III” (QC 9, § 133, p. 1195),<sup>5</sup> since

a Caesarist solution can also exist without a Caesar, without any great ‘heroic’ and representative personality. The parliamentary system has also provided a mechanism for such compromise solutions. [...] Every coalition government is a first stage of Caesarism, which either may or may not develop to more significant stages (the common opinion of course is that coalition governments, on the contrary, are the most ‘solid bulwark’ against Caesarism) (QC 13, § 27, pp. 1619-1620; SPN, p. 220).

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<sup>4</sup> We here substitute “solution by arbitrage” in an attempt to come closer to Gramsci’s “soluzione ‘arbitrale’” than SPN’s “particular solution” [editorial note].

<sup>5</sup> Cf. the rewritten “C” text of Q 13, §23 (SPN p. 220), whose only modification is not to include the word “very” before “different”, present instead in the “A” text [editorial note].

And in fact, since the PT formed a coalition government with the conservative forces, it ended up creating an amalgam between contrasting “forces which could in the last analysis fuse and unify, albeit after a wearying and bloody process” (*QC* 13, § 27, p. 1622; *SPN*, p. 222). But, this ambiguous game that has been taking place between apparently “contrasting” parties does not hide a deeper reality that is a concern in Brazilian politics. Due to bribes and generous campaign fundings, passed on by large companies, in addition to the lobbying of powerful economic groups and the pressures of the monopolized media, parliamentarians undertake responsibilities with an autocratic and undemocratic power that bypasses the voters’ choice, manipulates the Congress and public institutions, empties democracy and subdues national sovereignty, thus giving way to a ‘camouflaged Caesarism’ consolidated in periods of the fragility and mutual destruction of conflicting political groups. Gramsci adds that the activity of this “modern Caesarism” does not need to resort to the army or to brute force, since “The functionaries of the parties and economic unions can be corrupted or terrorised, without any need for military action in the grand style – of the Caesar or 18 Brumaire type” (*QC*, 13 § 27, p. 1620; *SPN*, p. 220). Thus, using powerful means of persuasion and a sophisticated technological arsenal, Gramsci notes, “[...] modern Caesarism is more a police than a military system” (*QC*, 13 § 27, p. 1622; *SPN*, p. 222), meaning that it is “[...] police in a broad sense”, i.e., “[...] not only in the state service directed to the repression of crime, but in the ensemble of organised state and private forces to protect the political and economic dominion of the ruling class” (p. 1620). The strategy of this “modern Caesarism”, made of plots and espionage, of boycotts and embargo, of economic blackmail and investor flight, of smear campaigns and of criminalization of the ‘enemy’, is the most widely used mode in our time to disable the socializing and democratic potential of popular movements, to destabilize ‘unreliable’ governments and to pave the way to the invasion and destruction of whole countries (Losurdo, 2014, pp. 71-76).

As we all know, in the history of Brazil, except for brief parentheses of democratic periods, the power conducted ‘from outside and from above’ has always been present. Today, giving continuity to this tradition and imposing themselves as the

dominant components, there are the financial system, market savagery and media monopoly, which conduct the destinies of the country in a “Caesarist” way. Although not seen directly, this unquestionable power establishes prices, interest rates and currency value, determines the type of production, of commerce, of urbanization, of social services and benefits, deforests and concentrates huge tracts of land, freely syphons off the country’s foreign currency, bribes politicians, kills with impunity Indians, Blacks and poor people in the slums, builds a powerful ideological apparatus, installs an extensive private network of schools and universities, favours the dissemination of narcotizing churches and the diffusion of a stupid and empty culture.

People who think this an exaggerated picture of the situation ignore that, in the composition of the National Congress, large landowners, industrialists, the great businessmen, evangelicals and “the bullet bench” predominate. A framework that has driven the experienced Congressman Ivan Valente to state that “What we have there [in the Legislative] today is an apparatus, which I would say is almost of the mafia-type” (Valente, 2015, p. 21). Shielded in the distant Central Plateau, similar to economic and business offices in their modern castles, the island of ‘the representatives of the people’ has become a kind of ‘big brother’ television show, far from national reality, impervious to national protests and strikes, refractory to debate and to popular consultation and in a situation of visible “decomposition” [of parliamentarianism] (*QC* 4, § 22, 442; *PN* Vol. II, p. 162). To remain in the government at any cost, the PT had to adjust and make big concessions to this system, creating programs that blend social assistance with neoliberalism, leading the party to progressively drawing away from popular aspirations and from the creation of a new project for society. Following the path of permeable and reformist centre-left parties in Europe, which try to survive by meekly managing capitalism, the PT started to abandon its distinctive stance. It did not realize that the action of confronting the insidious forms of Caesarism used by capitalism in today’s world is far different from the actions of resistance to military dictatorship. The current form of domination, which is particularly engendered in the impenetrable intricacies of the financial system and in the charms of the media, is more subtle and seductive and, at the same time, is highly corrosive and

totalizing. The rise of this “soft Caesarism” (Losurdo, 1993, p. 284), as a matter of fact, has not been taking place only in the economic sphere, in the State apparatus and in the media, but is also progressing to privatizing public services, to anaesthetizing consciences, and is even stealing the scene of the popular movements themselves when it mobilizes significant social groups on the streets. That is what has been going on, for example, with the movement “Come into the Street” (*Vem para a Rua*) and “Students for Freedom” (*Estudantes pela Liberdade* – EPL – founded in 2012 and inspired by the “Students for Liberty” of the United States), which gave way to “Free Brazil Movement” (*Movimento Brasil Livre* – MBL), organizations funded by the Koch Brothers and the ATLAS Economic Research Foundation, aimed at training young Latin Americans to combat “left” governments and defend old stances in new languages (*Brasil de Fato*, 2015, pp. 4-5). As Marx had observed, capitalism does not focus only on economic structures, but also determines the model of social relations, the process of subjectivity production and the diffusion of common sense, since, as observed above, “the class which has the means for material production has, at the same time, the means for intellectual production” (Marx-Engels, 1998, p. 48).<sup>6</sup> We can therefore understand Gramsci’s insistence on conducting “a study of how the ideological structure of a ruling class is actually organized: that is, the material organization meant to preserve, defend, and develop the theoretical or ideological ‘front’” (*QC* 3, § 49, p. 332-3; *PN* Vol. II, p. 52). A much more urgent need in a country like Brazil – where the imposing power of newspapers, magazines, television networks, churches, schools and civil society organizations are in the hands of the ruling class and of international capital – makes this domain practically absolute.

### 3. *New possibilities for popular forces*

Thirty years after the end of the dictatorship, Brazil is now facing one of the most crucial crises in its short democratic history. What appears in the media and in common sense is the call for ‘ethical

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<sup>6</sup> This is a literal rendering of the Brazilian translation of *Die deutsche Ideologie*; the standard English translation reads “the class which has the means of material production at its disposal, consequently also controls the means of mental production” (Marx-Engels 1976, p. 59).

values' and the need for a redeemer 'car wash' cleaning to conquer the 'cancer' of corruption. This is a commendable operation, without doubt, which is finally reaching some exponents in the higher spheres and demonstrating a certain stability of the investigative and judicial institutions. But, behind this narrative, what really lies at the heart of the crisis is the impasse between ineffective and obsolete projects of society and the lack of new political forces to form a "historical bloc" able to galvanize the country around "will as operative awareness of historical necessity, as protagonist of a real and effective historical drama" (QC 13, § 1, p. 1559; SPN, p. 130). Both populist development and the reactionary Caesarism of economic groups are unable to promote the expansion of democracy and respond to the growing 'historical needs' of the masses. If the first project is eluded when it aims at reducing misery without breaking with capitalism and the mechanisms of inequality, the other repeats old formulas that lead to retrocession and exclusion. While much energy is consumed in the bonfire of 'small-time politics' and eroded parties, the crisis is exposing the fracture of a country that is still economically, socially and politically divided, split between the "*panelaço*"— in which people protest by banging on empty pots — of the middle/upper classes which feel threatened in their earnings and privileges and the fear of classes C and D consumed by anguish as they see the prospects for better living conditions moving away from them. Although we cannot deny that the PT Government provided a number of benefits for these lower classes, the framework of an underdeveloped and unequal country has not changed substantially. The permanence of the PT in power led many to think that the changes would occur naturally and gradually, a naïve belief that subdued the combativeness of the popular organizations and left the path clear for the growing expansion of private powers, the financial aristocracy, transnational companies, cartels, of a tremendous parallel power that has been spreading to all sectors without any obstacle. So, while the patronizing Bonapartism of 'peace and love Lulism' favored political disarmament and a 'peaceful' coexistence between classes, the "Caesarism" without scruple of big capital found a fertile ground to reorganize and strengthen itself. In no other period in the history of Brazil have the profits of banks and rentiers grown so fast and the empire of the

media and private business thriven so prodigiously, while the “phenomenon of transformism’ introduced by Lulism produced a

scarcity of statesmen and government leaders, impoverishment of parliamentary life [...] hence impoverishment of cultural life [...]. The universities and all the institutions that developed intellectual and technical skills were impervious to the life of the parties and the living reality of national life, and they created apolitical national cadres, with a purely rhetorical and non-national mental formation (*QC* 3, § 119, pp. 387-388; *PN* Vol. II, p. 106).

In addition to revealing how illusory it is within capitalism to construct a government in which everyone wins, the current crisis is showing that the antagonism between classes “is historically incurable and indeed becomes especially acute with the advent of Caesarist forms” (*QC* 13, § 27, p. 1622; *SPN*, p. 222). These forms make it clear who is “[...] the sovereign that decides on the state of exception” (Schmitt, 1972, p. 33; Agamben, 2003) and that “[i]n a capitalist society no one governs without entrepreneurs. They have a right of veto over the country” (Bresser-Pereira, 2014). In these conditions, therefore, there is no possibility of pushing democracy beyond ‘certain limits’ because, in practice, real powers act without the consent of democracy and nullify popular sovereignty (Semeraro, 2014, pp. 195 et seq.).

As suggested by the etymology of the word, crisis means insight, choice, decision to be taken when facing impasses and crossroads. In the crucial period Brazil is living now, the ability to discern and reorganize quickly can open paths to boost reactionary forces or to develop social and political movements able to break away from the current system and create a favourable condition for “an unprecedented expansion of historical materialism” (*QC* 3, § 34, p. 311; *PN* Vol. II, p. 33). For Gramsci, in fact, “the crisis is the place of ambivalence. Of instability, conflicts and of quite powerful progressive dynamics” (Burgio 2007, p. 44). And, even in situations of impasses and serious danger, Gramsci notes that “in the movement of history there is never any turning back, and that restorations *in toto* do not exist” (*QC* 13, § 27, p. 1619; *SPN*, pp. 219-220) because history remains “dialectical” (cf. *QC* 15, § 62, p. 1827; *SPN*, p. 114) and “despite all appearances” its field is left open to the action of groups which know how to act politically and



can organize themselves to dispute hegemony (cf. *QC* 6, § 138, p. 802; *SPN*, p. 239).

In this way, if after the military dictatorship the main objective was to establish the democratic rule of law, to ensure civil and political liberties, now, in even more adverse times (due to the reigning climate of dystopia, disappointment and disorientation), in order not to jeopardize these achievements, it is not only a 'selective clean-up' conducted by the judiciary that is necessary. The situation also, and above all, requires the establishment and the protagonism of new and more vigorous popular political organizations able to carry forward the process of democratization and make further progress, especially in the field of the socialization of political and economic power and in the creation of a national State of a popular character. In this audacious and higher political venture, aware that the freedom that makes democracy possible is the same that threatens it constantly, it will be more and more necessary to learn how to engage in combat in a society characterized by complex "relations of forces" (*QC* 13, § 17, pp. 1578-1589; *SPN*, pp. 175-185), in which the "siege is reciprocal", by sophisticated ideological instruments that feature an "unprecedented concentration of hegemony" (*QC* 6, §138, p. 802; *PN* Vol. III, p. 109). Since this is not a conjunctural crisis, but an "organic" and long-term global one that "cannot be overcome except by creating a new structure" (*QC* 14, § 57, p. 1716; *FSPN*, p. 224), the "struggle for hegemony" will only be possible with strong organizations of popular collective subjects, prepared for a wide and capillary "war of position", that is "compact, difficult, requiring exceptional abilities of patience and inventiveness" (*QC* 6 § 138, p. 802; *PN* Vol. III, p. 109), a war that is able to create an irreplaceable and permanent education for self-government, without which "some form of Bonapartism will emerge" (*QC* 1, § 158, p. 139; *PN* Vol. I, p. 236).

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# Organic Intellectuals: Legitimizing Agribusiness Production in Brazil

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# Organic Intellectuals: Legitimizing Agribusiness Production in Brazil

## **Abstract**

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## **Abstract**

The scope of this article is to analyze the implementation of forest policy and the role played by Blairo Borges Maggi, in the Brazilian state of Mato Grosso, during the period 2003-2010, namely the years coinciding, in the main, with both Lula's term of office as President and with Maggi's governorship of the Mato Grosso state. The approach and conditions of the policy were based on non-invasive technology – such as remote sensing imagery and a Geographic Information System (GIS) database regarding deforestation areas – and attempted to effectively control part of the deforestation in the State. An apparent contradiction was created, since the state governor is closely linked to the agribusiness sector. We draw on Gramsci's concept of the organic intellectual in our analysis and explanation of this paradox in the Mato Grosso state, in order to understand the role played by Maggi in the process. Thus, we formulate the hypothesis that classifies the governor of the Mato Grosso state as not a revolutionary organic intellectual, as some might argue, but an organic intellectual whose reformist proposals are aimed at maintaining the hegemony of his particular group, which – in turn – sees the environmental theme as a threat to this hegemony.

## **Keywords**

Gramsci, Rural Licensing, Deforestation, Organic Intellectual, Market, Natural Capital

# *Organic Intellectuals: Legitimizing Agribusiness Production in Brazil*

Carlos Hiroo Saito and Andréa A. Azevedo

## *1. Introduction*

In the period under study (2003-2010), environmentalist and agribusiness representatives were in mutual opposition regarding the enforcement of the Forest Code: from the agribusiness point of view, application of this legal norm would possibly see a reduction of the productive area in the Mato Grosso (MT) state; from the environmentalists' point of view, enforcement of the law was the only one way to control deforestation, hence the necessity to monitor this enforcement.

The Mato Grosso state, in the Midwest region of Brazil, greatly expanded its Gross Domestic Product in the decade 1990-2000, based mainly on a horizontal growth of its areas of agricultural production. To put this growth in perspective, from 1992 to 2007, the state of Mato Grosso doubled the amount of deforestation as compared with what had happened up to 1992 (an increase of 105%), representing approximately an additional deforestation of 18 million hectares (180 thousand km<sup>2</sup>), an area corresponding to almost one and a half times that of England (Azevedo, 2009). According to the Mato Grosso Environment Minister, from 2003 to 2007 almost 7 million hectares were deforested. Moreover, in 2002, the state elected as governor Blairo Borges Maggi, popularly regarded as “the King of Soy”, one of the largest producers of this commodity in the world, “the hardest working man in the Brazilian soy business” according to Forbes Magazine, and a man who in 2014 joined the ranks of the world's billionaires.

Nevertheless, it was under this governor that the Mato Grosso state consolidated a supposed green policy. In 2000, Mato Grosso began implementing a monitoring system, with seemingly ideal technological support, to enforce the Brazilian Forest Code. This had been stipulated by a 1965 law governing environmental conservation in private areas in Brazil, and remained in force until its substitution in 2012 by subsequent legislation. This legal code, known as SLAPR (Sistema de Licenciamento Ambiental para

Propriedades Rurais” or “System for Environmental Licensing of Rural Properties”), in its conceptual design contained the integration of licensing (information), monitoring (satellite images) and an inspection conducted from the monitoring step (enforcement). The system reached its full development in 2003, and farmers entering the system had their deforestation areas monitored by satellite images, in order to obtain a certificate of legal conformity that their deforestation areas was maintaining the reservation areas determined by law. The certification itself is obtained through the Mato Grosso Legal Program, created by the governor in 2008.

Bieler and Morton (2003, p. 1) recommend trying to “find out, through an empirical analysis, which social forces attempt to formulate a hegemonic project around which ideas” and investigating how the “forces of capital become internalized in a particular form of state or how they are resisted”. Our study is based on an empirical case investigation of the production structure and, in attempting to characterize the social forces who are the key collective actors, thus fits well into Bieler and Morton’s framework and the methodological challenges that these authors address. We bring into play Gramsci’s concept of organic intellectual in order to seek theoretical support to explain the paradox of the Mato Grosso state and understand the role played by state governor Maggi (2003-2010) in the process, as well as the strategy employed by him at that moment in time, which resulted in the change of the Brazilian Forest Code. Thus the argument we adduce here is that, despite the declared profile of the Mato Grosso state governor as a politician putting forward reformist environmentalist proposals, he should be regarded as an organic intellectual of the agribusiness sector, dedicated to the maintenance of the hegemony of that group.

## *2. The reaction of agribusiness to environmental criticism: the System for Environmental Licensing of Rural Properties enters the scene*

In 1999/2000 the first public policy instrument was produced, and proclaimed to be being capable of licensing and monitoring and, thus, effectively overseeing the implementation of the Forest Code in the Amazon. The rationale for the policy makers was based on assumptions that the data on deforestation in the Mato Grosso

state could only be truly known if there was reliable information, and that this information, if used correctly, could generate control and ensure the implementation of the Forest Code. This, then, was the logic lying behind the new system, and the big news was that this would be done using remote sensing technology combined with a Geographic Information System (GIS), providing licensing which would be able to identify individually each farm where there is agricultural activity. This identification of property, including the demarcation of the Legal Reserve and Permanent Preservation Areas, would be a key instrument to facilitate the monitoring of deforestation, defining them as legal or illegal activities, and to name the possible offenders.

The political-economic justification for the implementation of instruments of control (SLAPR being an example of this) relies exactly on this possibility of distinguishing between legal and illegal deforestation. By this differentiation, it would be possible to respond to society and to international public opinion, which are demanding that the State should adopt a clear position in face of the increasing deforestation. This would legalize at least part of the agriculture activities within the Mato Grosso state, since rural property could be licensed. The legalization would legitimize this form of production through alleged control by the State.

The technical secretary in the Federal Subprogram of Natural Resources of the Ministry of the Environment was interviewed regarding the implementation of SLAPR in the Mato Grosso state and explicitly defined the commercial and economic role SLAPR could have. The original idea, he stated, was that the use of technology involved in the system would make it possible to verify, in the near future, the environmental situation of a licensed property on any computer on the planet and so it would be possible to develop a certified market for products of the Mato Grosso state (Azevedo, 2009).

In fact, legalization of deforestation occurred within the system. Within licensed rural properties, comparing the 1995-1999 period (before implementation of the system) with the 2000-2007 period (after its implementation), there was an increase in deforestation of about 32%. The control sample, with rural properties outside the system, indicates that deforestation increased by only 1% from the first to the second period. However, in the second period (after



implementation), only the SLAPR sample was legal. This means that the implementation of SLAPR, instead of reducing deforestation, allowed its expansion, ensuring however a State-sanctioned status of legal deforestation. Except for some deforestation within the Legal Reserve (about 2.6% of the licensed area until 2006), all deforestation had a formal permission from the State (Azevedo 2009). In this institutional setting, the policy has enhanced a synergy between economic and the ecological logics (Rajão and Hayes 2009), with the numbers creating an illusion that Mato Grosso state was on the way to ending illegal logging.

### *3. The legitimacy of capitalism and hegemony over environmental concern*

To understand the apparent paradox between economic status and the implementation of environmental policies, it is important to refer to a theoretical support to explain the changes that capitalism has assimilated after the emergence of environmental concern.

The Mato Grosso state has entered the list of environmentalist criticisms as a major world grain producer, achieved at the expense of losing a large portion of natural areas, including those with high environmental fragility (i.e. large areas of the headwaters of the Amazon basin and the Pantanal). Boltanski and Chiapello (2002) argue that the criticism of capitalism undermines the pillars for its justifications. But, for the end of capitalism, this interpretation is too simple and deterministic.

During the increasing occupation of the Amazon over the last 50 years, several institutional logics have set the tone for environmental policies and the technologies used in these policies. These logics have formed over time and sometimes work in synergy, and sometimes in conflict, and are often present simultaneously: such is the case of ecological and economic logics (Rajão and Hayes 2009). This complex context reveals an apparent contradictory behavior especially in those stakeholders more bound to an economic logic, since, while they fear and condemn the increasing appreciation of the ecological discourse, they are also simultaneously becoming aware that they must somehow seek engagement in this discourse; at the same time, however, their practices do not represent full adherence to the green agenda. This may be interpreted as a parallel to Gramsci's analysis of any system

of crystallized ideas when faced with current practical needs: a “struggle between conservation and revolution, etc., between what was thought in the past and the new thinking; between the old that refuses to die and the new that wants to live, etc.” (Q6, § 139, Gramsci 1975, p. 311; Gramsci 2007, p. 110).

It is important to say that the resulting processes may be only an adaptive simulacrum of the expected changes, and do not imply a real greening revolution. Capitalism has appropriated the non-conflictive concept of Sustainable Development and also introduced it in the market system through various policies that have sought to overcome the conflicting sides in the dialectic of development: the environment and economic growth. (Leff 2006; Martinez-Alier and Jusmet 2001). Thus, a reformist market came to be established in order to meet worldwide environmental criticism after the 1980s. National environmental laws started to be demanded as a guarantee for international credits and access to foreign markets. In addition to national laws, the market begins to reward those business groups that did more than legally required or in some way proved that their so-called *best practices* constituted “*the green seal*” (Leff 2006).

In this way, from nature now converted into natural capital, capitalism has dictated a new geopolitics, drawing a new topological design of the international division of labor. Northern countries, with an intensive production of knowledge in industrial and agricultural sectors, are “colonizing” practices in the South, especially as regards multinationals selling ready-made technology packages. Thus, countries in the South are being increasingly seen as exporters of natural capital (Azevedo *et al.* 2007).

The Mato Grosso state is an emblematic case of the new international division of labor after the globalization of world markets. This state has specialized in the production of agricultural commodities with a high environmental cost in terms of loss of biodiversity and erosion of various other natural resources such as soil, water (by deforestation practice and the establishment of an industrial agriculture), and the consequent contribution of these practices to global warming (Nepstad 2006; Santilli *et al.* 2005; Fearnside 2005).

This process of a great increase in agricultural production, seen particularly since 1998, has been not only a process spurred on by

local forces and the entrepreneurship of migrants. All the infrastructure provided by public and private investments, such as the location of large buyers of grain crushers, funding for storage structures, and the logistics for transportation, have been important vectors as part of this dynamic (Becker 2007). Furthermore, this process has a direct interface with international demands as regards specialized commodities producers (Nepstad 2005), the regional history of land owning and land concentration, and also national government desires to gain more foreign currency by commodity exportation, thereby contributing to obtaining a balance of payments surplus (Rajão 2008). In short, the Mato Grosso state has assembled a number of conditions to play the desired role in the new international division of labor, including technological, economic, political and even ideological aspects.

However, in the late 1990s, despite the stimulus of a globalized economy, the environmental critique had struck at the agribusiness sector very strongly, arguing against its consequences. The Mato Grosso state was pictured as one with very high rates of deforestation (as had occurred in 1995) and with alarming levels of burnings (as was seen in 1998). Something needed to be done so that these criticisms of the environmental aspect of production could be softened, and the agribusiness enterprises could be legitimized as environmentally responsible. This legitimation is part of the continued accumulation of capitalism in an exercise of hegemony “without force predominating excessively over consent”, as Gramsci explains (Q 13, §37, Gramsci 1975, p. 1638; summarized in Gramsci 1971, p. 80n; cf. also the first draft, Q 1, §48; Gramsci 1975, p. 59; Gramsci 1994, p. 156). The US scholar Michael Goldberg explains that hegemony “means the success of the dominant classes in presenting their definition of reality, their view of the world, in such a way that it is accepted by other classes as ‘common sense’. The general ‘consensus’ is that it is the only sensible way of seeing the world” (<https://faculty.washington.edu/mlg/courses/definitions/hegemony.html>). In the words of another commentator, “Belief, faith, dogmatism may be understood as embryonic forms of hegemony, but a fully developed hegemony is a form of intellectual and moral leadership in which the mass of the population understands its own interests as being fundamentally compatible with the dominant social group” (Riley 2011, p. 12).

Thus, legitimacy in this case represents the construction and maintenance of the hegemony of the agribusiness sector to dictate the way in which the land surface in the state is occupied and used, integrating urban and rural areas beyond the economic practice of agribusiness. This legitimacy also means the acceptance and rational justification of this land occupation and use by society in general, which means not only the agribusiness sector but also small producers, policy makers and even some environmentalists. It is opportune to remember that Gramsci believed that hegemony was ultimately rooted in economic power, as one of the expressions of class struggle through a combination of force and consent (Brosio 1994, p. 50). Gramsci in fact noted that “for though hegemony is ethico-political, it must also be economic, must necessarily be based on the decisive function exercised by the leading group in the decisive nucleus of the economy” (Q 13, §18, Gramsci 1975; p. 1591; Gramsci, 1971, p. 161).

Hall (1996, p. 417) follows this reasoning, and while arguing that once hegemony is not exclusively an ideological phenomenon but must have a base in “the decisive nucleus of the economy”, combats a mechanistic viewpoint that tends “to see all other dimensions of the social formation as simply mirroring ‘the economic’ [...], as having no other determining or structuring force in their own right”. Buckel and Fischer-Lescano (2009) also reinforce this idea. Gramsci’s notion of hegemony is related to his view of power as a social construction related to economic, political, moral, intellectual, cultural and ideological questions and also articulated to the concept of the historical bloc and their agents. The historical bloc is seen as a result of the structure and superstructure in which “the complex, contradictory and discordant ensemble of the superstructure is the reflection of the ensemble of the social relations of production” (Q 8, §182; Gramsci 1975, p. 1051; Gramsci 1971, p. 366), creating an organic cohesion between intellectuals and people-nation (Q 11, §67; Gramsci 1975, p. 1505-6; Gramsci 1971, p. 418) responsible for promoting a political initiative able to “liberate the economic thrust from the dead weight of traditional policies” (Q 13, §23; Gramsci 1975, p. 1612; Gramsci 1971, p. 168). The question hinges around how this organic cohesion can be created, and who the agent of this process may be, i.e. whether it can be forged by representatives of the economic

hegemonic group or class. That is why Smith (2010) argues in favor of proximity of the hegemony concept to the leadership notion rather than the dominance one.

Therefore, in addition to these macro-structural aspects, there is a need to analyze the role played by specific social agents, which may be decisive for a possible strengthening of the tendency of a line of discourse and public policies, which are able both to spread illusions and build new hegemonies in the public sphere.

Fischman and McLaren (2005) remind us that the features of consent and coercion that underlie Gramsci's model of hegemonic domination are dynamic categories, both forming part of the process to achieve supremacy:

A social group dominates antagonistic groups, which it tends to 'liquidate', or to subjugate perhaps even by armed force; it leads kindred and allied groups. A social group can, and indeed must, already exercise "leadership" before winning governmental power (...); it subsequently becomes dominant when it exercise power, but even if it holds it firmly in its grasp, it must continue to 'lead' as well (Q 19, §24; Gramsci 1975, p. 2010; Gramsci 1971, pp. 57-58).

Because of this leadership component, which means that "hegemonic relationships not only play an ethical role but also a pedagogical one" (Fischman and McLaren, 2005, p. 3), when we integrate this pedagogical role with economic interest, we need to recognize that "hegemony requires the transcendence of narrow factional interests. Economic interests reflect into ideological consciousness" (Gündogan 2008, p. 52). That is why a profound look into the supposed agribusiness greening of the Mato Grosso state is important, as a first step to admitting the possibility of re-articulation into an alternative hegemonic practice. Or, in the present case study, it can describe its reinforcing practice.

How then is it possible to create an illusion that agribusiness in the Mato Grosso state could be on the path of conversion to an environmentally friendly practice? How could the state government, headed by the largest producer of soybeans (thus the expression of the presence of agribusiness at the helm of regional political power), be recognized as an environmentally-friendly government without creating an internal conflict around the person of the governor and his productive roots? What role could he (governor Maggi) have to serve the interests of the economic sector he still

represents? These are the central questions to be posed to this study.

In this sense, it seems worthwhile examining the concept of organic intellectual in the light of that context.

#### 4. *The concept of organic intellectual in hegemonic meanings*

In Gramsci (Q 12, §1; Gramsci 1975, p. 1513; Gramsci 1971, p. 5), we read that

Every social group, coming into existence on the original terrain of an essential function in the world of economic production, creates together with itself, organically, one or more strata of intellectuals which give it homogeneity and an awareness of its own function not only in the economic but also in the social and political fields. The capitalist entrepreneur creates alongside himself the industrial technician, the specialist in political economy, the organisers of a new culture, of a new legal system etc. It should be noted that the entrepreneur himself represents a higher level of social elaboration, already characterised by a certain directive and technical (i.e. intellectual) capacity: he must have a certain technical capacity not only in the limited sphere of his activity and initiative but in other spheres as well, at least in those which are closest to economic production. He must be an organiser of masses of men; he must be an organiser of the 'confidence' of investors in his business, of the customers for his product, etc.

Thus, a first hypothesis is that governor Maggi could be embodying the role of Gramscian concept of an organic intellectual linked this time to agribusiness. However, several objections have been raised about this hypothesis.

A first objection arose from non-Gramscian researchers, who demonstrated the attachment to the concept of traditional intellectual. In this context, an intellectual means someone whose intellectual status would be recognized by Academia as a result of accumulated titles and/or the activity of theoretical elaboration. These intellectuals always come from a group of experts of practical knowledge, such as lawyers, mathematicians, doctors, teachers, whose quantitative presence in a given society depends on its economic development and thus to the growing possibility of the social division of labor, as argued by Sartre in his *A Plea for Intellectuals* (Sartre 1994). Thus, based on the vision of Sartre's classical intellectual, governor Maggi would be excluded from this

group. However, this discourse was criticized by Gramsci, described by him as a methodological error in the distinction of intellectuals and their role in society.

The most widespread error of method seems to me that of having looked for this criterion of distinction in the intrinsic nature of intellectual activities, rather than in the ensemble of the system of relations in which these activities (and therefore the intellectual groups who personify them) have their place within the general complex of social relations (Q12 §1; Gramsci 1975, p. 1516; Gramsci, 1971, p. 8).

If we accept this argument of Gramsci's, we could overcome this first objection, and look for the understanding of the intellectuals' role and origin within social relations and their corresponding historical context. They are not pure in themselves, but are products of history, with their consequent commitment to their social class or group. The supposed neutrality of the intellectuals usually serves to reinforce the hegemony of the ruling class. Additionally, Gramsci says that all men are intellectual, and 'although one can speak of intellectuals, one cannot speak of non-intellectuals' (Q12 §3, p. 1550; Gramsci 1971, p. 9). Thus, we may conclude that there are different types or profiles of intellectuals, some of them politically engaged to forge an alternative hegemony, and others committed to the maintenance of the ruling class hegemony. For Gramsci, both groups include his category of organic intellectuals.

We should now face a second category of objection to our central hypothesis: Do organic intellectuals necessarily mean left-wing politically engaged intellectuals? We have had to face objections to our analysis based on the mistaken belief that the term organic intellectual would refer only to the intellectual that is bound and committed to the working class.

Paolo Nosella (2005), a well-known researcher in Brazil who has focused on issues of "Work and Education" and the "History of Education", and is one of the great contributors in the spread of the Antonio Gramsci's ideas, stated that just such a view was quite common in the 1980s, when many people erroneously felt that all organic intellectuals would necessarily be progressive, left-wing militants. Challenging this, Lino Resende (2006), in an article representing part of his master's degree dissertation in Social

History, observes that Gramsci expands the concept of intellectual, giving a connotation of formulator to organic intellectual, who could either be of the hegemonic classes or of those who act in the context of the production of an alternative hegemony in favor of the subaltern groups and classes. According to the same author “organic, in short, is the intellectual who participates, who acts, who helps in the formulation of a new hegemony or engages in the maintenance of hegemony. On the one hand and the other, the organicity comes from commitment, from participation, from the formulation of ideas to help in political action, whether hegemonic or counter-hegemonic” (Resende 2006, p. 6), where “counter-hegemonic” is to be understood as the action of the subaltern groups involved.

In the passage quoted about the formation of the intellectuals Gramsci said that “the capitalist entrepreneur creates alongside himself the industrial technician, the specialist in political economy, the organisers of a new culture” (Q12 §1, p. 1513; Gramsci 1971, p. 5).

When the general hypothesis of this work was put under debate at a round-table discussion among academics in 2009, part of the discussion hinged around just how “organic intellectuals” were to be understood, and here we saw the emergence of this second type of objection, as transcribed below:

What disturbs him [about another critic in the discussion group] – and that is the tone of the thinker whom I support “in spirit” – is exactly to question why we should give more power to someone who is a usurper of power, who bitterly and perversely promotes social inequality and environmental injustice [said of governor Maggi]. For my ideological choice, I refuse to offer Blairo Maggi this profile [the status of organic intellectual of the agribusiness sector] because I want to preserve my Gramscian interpretation [of the organic intellectual – editorial note] as a revolutionary and essentially left-wing militant. And [I want to] continue to believe that the organic intellectual is one who fights in favor of the subaltern masses, the excluded, the marginalized, the shoeless and shirtless, and not just [a title that can be appended] to any specific group, whatever they are (discussant 1).

As it stands this participant does not seem to take into account that organic intellectuals may belong to a non-subaltern class, such as those representing the agribusiness sector. It is important to remember that although this participant defines himself as a



follower of Gramsci, he prefers give his own interpretation of Gramsci's ideas than read carefully Gramsci words. As quoted above, in Gramsci's view (Q 12 §1; Gramsci 1975, p. 1513; Gramsci 1971, p. 5) every social group creates together with itself those intellectuals who are, because of that fact, considered organic ones.

Another representative participant in the discussion also used the same argumentative logic, again denying the status of organic intellectual of the agribusiness sector to governor Maggi:

However, the idea of the intellectual that I also passionately advocate for the popular sectors, as Gramsci also did, is that these sectors develop for themselves and others sufficient legitimacy of a [new] rationality, true or not, but developed so as to resist in sharp debate, which has connective threads allowing them to find points of reference, because [this rationality] will sustain a more or less coherent and consistent political position. In this sense, there is an idea of 'ideology', of a certain *corpus*, a certain consistency, that is independent of 'the truth'. However I refuse to recognize that the opportunists whose theoretical framework is only that which provides accumulation, and whose support points are unassailable because they keep changing their underlying principles whenever the situation is convenient, and who live by the chance collection of capital gain, wherever they can find it, without ethical rules, who opportunistically change the legal and political apparatus, and many, many times, announce it in public and then undo it in private, I refuse to recognize that this killer cell [referring to Maggi] can be called a rational [human being] (discussant 2).

The analysis of these words shows that these people in the discussion group did not want to allow Maggi the title of "organic intellectual" since they considered him the representative of the agribusiness sector, and thus, a conservative stakeholder. Since their objection is based on their belief that "organic intellectuals" should be left-wing, this recognition leads us to conjecture that the basis for their argumentation is more than just a methodological error, as foreseen by Gramsci: it also seems closer to what Lenin (1940) had observed and criticized harshly as ultra-leftism. Lenin observed that "left-wing communism" corresponded to "an infantile disorder of Leftism" (1940, p. 24) or "left childishness" (1940, p. 26) which, in commenting on the debate regarding the participation of communist movements in parliamentary life, he also classified as a theoretical error. Can we conjecture that the refusal to see what Gramsci's theory can offer us (just because of the possibility of

applying the concept of organic intellectual to the governor they oppose) is a kind of ultraleftism and a theoretical error?

From an academic point of view, before people makes personal and private interpretations of Gramsci influenced by their own ideology, it is first necessary that we return to the Gramsci's original formulation of the organic intellectual. In this original theoretical framework, Gramsci just tries to get away from the traditional image of the intellectual to understand the dynamics and dialectics of social movements in the world and thus to rethink their practices. On many occasions it is possible to have in the progressive front those traditional intellectuals who adhere to a project of political transformation. But then there are those who are forged in the historical process, emerging from the factory floor, or from the social struggles of life (including those who were born in and remain linked to the agribusiness sector). These are organic intellectuals. Nevertheless, because of the privileged attention to those forged from social struggles, there is a misperception of recognizing as organic only those intellectuals committed to social change, as was commented on by Nosella (2005). The problem in the debate is whether we recognize this same process inside the dominant social class, and this will be discussed below. In particular, here we are talking about an agriculture sector, which is, in our times, strongly linked to processes of accumulation in the form of agribusiness.

This sector includes individuals who have social origins distant from those situated among the traditional intellectuals, but they have a historical role in capital accumulation. The strategies and justifications in the light of globalized capitalism, and of a world in constant transformation, often require of this sector a highly dynamic behavior, sometimes having several intellectuals allied to their political project, while at other times their own members are required to think and act in favor of themselves. At the present time, one of the most important things for members of the agribusiness sector is how to cope with the increasing importance of environmental issues and how to find strategies for forwarding their interests of capital accumulation. These preoccupations should of course consider an evaluation of the correlation of forces, which may provide decisive elements to strategically opt for an open confrontation or a veiled face – a matter of hegemony. This can

resemble the strategy of legitimation of neoliberalism, as demonstrated by Crocetti (2004).

What Gramsci tried to draw attention to is precisely the fact that there is a movement of theoretical formulation that is seeking greater social cohesion and practical actions not only on the revolutionary side, but also on the side of those who desire the maintenance of the *status quo* (the ruling class), in different hues. He also addressed the question that, behind such movements, there is a quest for greater technical skills (instrumentation), where there is an obviously selectivity to serve their interests. We have to look at the whole historical process and the general class interests. Acknowledging this historical movement does not take away the character of our left-wing position and commitment to social justice. It only makes us more cautious regarding what is going on in terms of social struggles.

One should not therefore rush to assign the term organic intellectual only to those committed to transformative ideas, either by denying governor Maggi the profile of organic intellectual, or by giving him another name as does Semeraro (2006) with the use of the term 'functional intellectual'. It should be noted that, contrary to this trend, Ferreira Jr. and Bittar (2006) attributed to Jarbas Passarinho the status of organic intellectual in the service of the then military dictatorship in Brazil. Riley, basing himself on Gramsci's *Selections from Prison Notebooks*, recalled that Moderates won against Party of Action because, in his view, 'they were the organic intellectuals of the Piedmontese bourgeois aristocracy' in the Italian Risorgimento of the XIX century (2011, p. 17).

It is important to emphasize here that we are not discussing personal preferences. One may wish organic intellectuals always to be left-wing, but we need to understand that we are borrowing a theoretical framework from someone and we must take over its originality, preserving what was actually said, and not our own preference and interpretation. We are free to disagree with the thought of Gramsci, as others have done, but right now we are attempting to do him justice.

This does not detract from the value or merits the opposition presented here by the excerpts quoted from members of the discussion group. We insist only that we must distinguish what are

Gramsci's ideas, based on his writings, and what we think individually about his ideas.

Thus, regarding Gramsci's ideas, we should address the fact that a ruling class relies not only on coercive power and authority but on consent deriving from hegemony – what Gramsci calls the “intellectual and moral leadership” exercised by the ruling class. And it is in this context of (continuously) building and consolidating hegemony, that he highlights the role and the concept of the organic intellectual.

##### *5. Maggi as an agribusiness organic intellectual*

Governor Maggi tried to announce the forestry policy of the Mato Grosso state as a great environmentalist achievement and, therefore, a major advance in line with ecological principles. With this enhanced status the new Mato Grosso policy came to join a list of environmentally friendly initiatives, without contradicting the class interests of the agribusiness sector, a move made possible because environmental liability was not solved, and costs for producers are still located in the future. During Maggi's governorship there was an exhaustive attempt to ease legislation, so that, in the light of environmental protections laws, big farmers – linked to agribusiness – as much as medium farmers and small peasant farmers could adapt to this new context.

Researchers from the Federal University of Minas Gerais Environmental Issues Research Group (GESTA / FAFICH / UFMG), basing themselves on studies on hydroelectric licensing in the Minas Gerais state found a result that can be compared to the case of the Mato Grosso state (Zhourri *et al.* 2005). According to the group, laws and regulations are often ‘appropriated’ by capitalism so they are not an obstacle to private economic projects. In general, these enterprises obtain a connotation of ‘public interest’ in official discourse. The character of the organic intellectual can be seen in the Mato Grosso case because the governor was able to visualize the situation outlined and submit a practical action guided by (non-emancipatory) class interest, justified by an instrumental rhetoric, associated with technical interest (Habermas 1994). Thus, the governor utilized the illusion that technology alone is sufficient to obtain correct results,

fetishizing technology as Saito (1995) warned. It is also important to note that many farmers were expressing opinions based on the perception at a local and individual scale that indicated some worry or dissatisfaction with the advancement of SLAPR, since they believed it could result in a penalty and the surrender of the agribusiness sector to environmental dictates. This, then, is a demonstration that these producers did not have the strategic vision that may be possessed by the organic intellectual, but only an immediate and dull vision of an anonymous member of the social class to which they belong. In this context, it was said by many agribusiness representatives that the governor had forgotten his origins as a member of the agribusiness sector and was working against their interests. These criticisms were made without realizing the advantage that the legalization of deforestation was giving to the agribusiness sector, legitimizing the occupation of territory and attracting the most rigorous and exigent markets to the illusion they had of the end of deforestation. But even this inconvenience and lack of perception of individual members of the agribusiness sector also constitute evidence of the nature of “organic intellectual” represented by Maggi. The organic nature of this type of intellectual lies precisely in its ability to gather and articulate class interests in a broad perspective. Organic intellectuals also can be misunderstood by some individual members of the class that they seek to represent, but in terms of the final result, they turn out to be successful because they are able to strengthen and defend class interests in the medium and long term on a broader scale. Moreover, by actively seeking to underline the success of SLAPR, Maggi is trying to establish in Brazilian society a new hegemonic conception that SLAPR should be copied, as an exemplary model, by all states within the country and once this status is achieved, very few would dare to question the successful outcome: SLAPR would become unassailable and iconic. There would therefore be confirmation of what Eagleton said of Gramsci’s contribution:

It is with Gramsci that the crucial transition is effected from ideology as a “system of ideas” to ideology as lived, habitual, social practice – which must then presumably encompass the unconscious, inarticulate dimensions of social experience as well as the working of formal institutions.

In this way, Eagleton addressed the fact that ideology and hegemony are connected, “the concept of hegemony extends and enriches the notion of ideology”, considering “hegemony is never a once-and-for-all achievement, but has continually to be renewed, recreated, defended, and modified” (1991, p. 115). In concluding this chain of ideas, we recall that Gramsci’s analysis links ideology to the historical bloc: such analyses “reinforce the conception of historical bloc in which precisely material forces are the content and ideologies are the form, though this distinction between form and content has purely didactic value” (Q 7, §21; Gramsci 1975, p. 869; Gramsci 1971, p. 377; Gramsci 2007, p. 172).

In the Mato Grosso state, as well as the figure of the ex-governor being closely linked to the agribusiness sector, a fact thus empowering his policies, there is also the ethos of the hero, which valorizes someone who challenges difficulties, explores the vast potential of the country and somehow becomes a solitary pioneer in his context (Ames and Keck 1997-1998, p. 29). However, this ethos makes one believe that it is possible to transfer a person’s private ability to achieve economic growth to the economy of the community or the whole State. In this case, it is a transposition of the trajectory of life to politics, when the “primacy of the private” becomes the power in the “primacy of the public” (Bobbio 1997). The combination of all these elements contribute to legitimize Maggi as an organic leader of his class and also as an intellectual who “makes” new proposals to sustain the hegemony of the agribusiness sector.

An element that appears as essential to sustain hegemony is the propagation of an ideology that produces “spontaneous consent” (again using a phrase of Gramsci’s) for the ruling class. “Ideology provides hegemony with the possibility of remaining invisible, disseminated throughout the texture of social life” (Resende 2006, p. 14). In the case of the Mato Grosso state, the agribusiness sector, now led by its organic intellectuals, appears to be taking the stance publicly that it did wrong in the way it promoted land occupation, although it had reasons for so doing. So, it is showing apparent regret, and asking for a relaxation of the rules to agree to a new beginning, a renewed and sustainable one in view of a new socio-environmental scenario (Layrargues 1998).

Further, the economic rationale behind the form of land occupation is not clearly understood by society in general, including environmentalists. The high profitability generated in only a few years by agricultural commodities (soybeans and cotton), as happened in 2003 for example, is also absent from the agribusiness discourse. It is therefore clear that these justifications are being used as a legitimizing ideology in favor of this form of production and occupation of the territory. Marilena Chauí, one of Latin America's foremost philosophers and one of Brazil's most renowned public and politically engaged intellectuals, outlines how this process occurs, explaining that

The ideological production of social illusion aims to make all social classes accept the conditions in which they live, judging them as natural, normal, correct, fair, without attempting to transform them or really know it [social illusion], without taking into account the fact there is a profound contradiction between the actual conditions under which we live and ideas (Chauí, 1997, p. 174).

To accomplish this, effects are taken for causes: there is an inversion. For example, people used to say that 'environmental degradation was caused because there was a need to grow food' – and not because the landowners wanted to exploit more areas to get more profits'; or even 'environmental degradation has occurred because farmers were not charged by the government agencies' – and not because there was a convenience and connivance, through an informal institutional logic, such as a practice of corruption inside the environmental agencies. These are repertoires that are feeding ideology on agriculture in the Mato Grosso state, considered as being of 'vital importance to the state, for Brazil and the world'. In this search for legitimacy, the environmental issue has become an arena of contention for the exercise of hegemony by agribusiness.

This shifting scenario of conflicts, political achievements and setbacks around the environmental issue has a 'backstage' action which is often not clearly perceived: The agribusiness sector needs the state government for relaxation of the law. The state government, in turn, seeks the formulation of agreements and creation of consensus both vertically and horizontally. Vertically, it tries to establish commitments in favor of the agribusiness sector

with other levels of the Brazilian government system (i.e. the upper Federal level and the lower municipal level). Horizontally, the state government tries to obtain the adherence of other regional stakeholders, such as industries, financiers and environmental NGOs. Maggi acted in favor of the agribusiness sector, but tried to be seen as neutral. The agribusiness claim is considered one of the many external pressures to which the state government needs to respond. An article on Maggi's attendance at the 13th Conference of the Parties (COP) of the *United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change* portrays this new position: an awakened vocation to green issues:

The governor of the Mato Grosso state and soybean king, Blairo Borges Maggi, came to Bali to outline his newly awakened vocation to the green (and not green) soy plants. He sat next to Marina Silva, his former archrival, and signed an agreement yesterday with the Nature Conservancy NGO to raise US\$ 15 million and put all the farms in his state into the SLAPR, the system for licensing rural properties which allows the mapping of illegal deforestation by satellite (Angelo 2007).

This process of consultation and agreements between these seemingly opposing sides allowed the governor to consolidate his position, i.e. put himself forward as a legitimate representative in seeking solutions for the productive class, externally as regards non-local spheres (such as the Federal Government), and internally as the provider of environmental solutions for the state. Within this process of dialogue, the state government, and the figure of the governor in particular, used the discourse of 'sustainable development' as an ideology. Their hope, along with civil society organizations, was to build a new 'agri-environmental' image, as can be seen in a statement by Maggi during the Katoomba Meeting, held in Cuiabá-MT, in April 2009: "here in the Mato Grosso state, we are not in conflict with the environmental area, we are walking [together]".

Thus, it would appear that Maggi, as political representative of the regional state, but also as political representative of the agribusiness interests inside the state, is seeking to convince public opinion that he is forging consensus with other sectors of civil society.



Accordingly, the above arguments support the hypothesis formulated in this paper that Maggi is fulfilling more the role of organic intellectual for the agribusiness class, once we insert him into contemporary economic production; he is preparing an ethico-political concept, and enabling himself to pursue the organizational function of establishing social, political and economic hegemony. He is aware of his class representation and serves not only to build a consensus around the political project of his class, but also to ensure the legal and administrative functions necessary for it, as well as the maintenance of political power in society. He is aware of the type of production required by the global project of his class and has acted materially and culturally (working in the sphere of infrastructure and superstructure) for this purpose, mainly to strengthen the process of capital accumulation by agribusiness in a legitimated way when faced with environmental rhetoric.

Moreover, Maggi is also connected to the most advanced sectors of the agribusiness social group, in the sense that these sectors possess a historical view with long-term strategies, aiming at strengthening their positions regarding social struggles. Many members of his own class, because they are more conservative and attached to traditional forms of struggle and accumulation, do not understand his strategy of expansion and the consolidation of hegemony.

A new detail, to which it is worthwhile paying attention, should be noted in this scenario: after the initial analysis was done in accordance with the guidelines of this article, focusing primarily on the legitimacy of deforestation via SLAPR, ex-governor Maggi was subsequently elected as a new senator of the Republic from the Mato Grosso state. His arrival in the National Congress, just when a draft revision of the Brazilian Forest Code was formulated – the changes effectively eased a number of environmental protective rules – shows a multiple-fronted strategic action, in great synchrony with a broader national movement of the agribusiness sector. It is now clearer to see that these fronts include the removal of legal barriers, so as to legitimize the mode of land use by agribusiness, not to mention the change in legislation supported by the legislature in a representative democracy. This new scenario only reinforces the framework of analysis here presented, based on the Gramscian concept of the organic intellectual.

All these events are in accordance with the arguments put forward by Mayo (2011) that the State regulates economic agencies by working in tandem with them, and although appearing to be neutral, it effectively engages in structured partnerships with industry (in this case, agribusiness) to secure the right basis for the accumulation of global capital.

### *6. Conclusion*

The analysis of socioenvironmental conflicts, the apparent contradictions in State policies, and their implementations in the Mato Grosso state of Brazil, allow us to reflect more carefully on the paradox of a state that has records for deforestation and was governed by a significant representative of agribusiness, which is also at the same time implementing a modern and apparently efficient System for Environmental Licensing of Rural Properties (SLAPR) in order to control deforestation within the state. The key for understanding this paradox comes from the theoretical elaboration in Gramsci, mainly through his concept of the organic intellectual. The insight provided by this concept helps to reveal the hidden contradictions designed to curb the jingoism around SLAPR and allows us to carefully evaluate their potentialities and limitations. Despite some resistance from left-wing intellectuals in applying this concept to the proposed situation, we have here shown that such an unfounded resistance is caused by a misreading of the original concept of organic intellectual. Moreover, we argue that the Gramscian concept of organic intellectual is still valuable in its original form in present-day conditions and contributes to understanding complex situations involving policy makers and social processes, especially when these situations are marked by a contradiction that formal logic classifies as a paradox.

This experience of Maggi's mediation and leadership, even in the environmental arena, shows that the organic intellectual is not necessarily revolutionary, nor does s/he have to be left-wing: indeed, as Gramsci notes: the 'political party, for all groups [...] is responsible for welding together the organic intellectuals of a given group – the dominant one – and the traditional intellectuals' (Q 12, §1; Gramsci 1975, p. 1522; Gramsci 1971, p. 15). Maggi is an organic intellectual of the agribusiness sector and, because of that,

was able to achieve the position of governor through a political party, and then in addition, the position of senator of the Republic at a crucial moment of the struggles between environmentalist and agribusiness sectors around the law for the protection of native vegetation. Maggi – in his role as governor – acted as a formulator of the ethico-politico-cultural propositions of the agribusiness sector for the whole of society, making alliances with environmental groups that were former opponents in the public sphere.

At this point, let us refer back to the guiding questions posed in this work: how, in the Mato Grosso state, could the representatives of agribusiness create the illusion that this economic sector is on the way to conversion to an environmentally friendly practice? How could the state government, headed by the largest soybean producer, be recognized as a government that implements environmentally-friendly policies? How is it that this same state government, in contradiction to its new image, simultaneously honors and boosts the production of commodities and their way of land occupation by intense deforestation and opening new areas of planting? In this sense, the set of findings that was commented on as answers to these questions indicate that a way was conceived to legitimize the capitalist production of commodities in the state, headed by an organic intellectual representative of the productive sector, namely the agribusiness one.

At the current time, all who seek a role in favor of sustainable practices in the private and the public spheres, guided by critical thinking, still have much to learn. More than that, intellectual vigilance is required to correctly perceive the movements of concealment, accommodation and coupling to an environmental discourse without the corresponding practical results. The Mato Grosso state is one example of these situations that require an open-minded posture, so to evaluate more carefully the potential of SLAPR and recognize the historical limits to which this system is conditioned. In this way, we can break the illusion and fetishization around technology on which this system is based, recognizing that a deforestation control system cannot, *a priori*, be considered successful only because it is being supported by remote sensing technology and GIS.

Finally, this case study has been an attempt, based on Gramscian concepts applied to the present, to describe how agribusiness as a social force intends to formulate a hegemonic project around the idea of sustainability, and to investigate how these forces of capital become internalized in a particular form of state or how they are resisted.

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# Review: Antonio Gramsci edited by / a cura di Mark McNally

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## Review: Antonio Gramsci edited by / a cura di Mark McNally

### **Abstract**

*A Classic for Today: Gramsci's Political Thought (on McNally's Edited Volume)*

### **Abstract**

The article reviews the volume edited by Mark McNally *Antonio Gramsci*, Basingstoke, Palgrave Macmillan 2015.

### **Keywords**

Gramsci, English, Historical Context, Key Debates, Major Conceptual Issues, Contemporary Relevance

# *A Classic for Today: Gramsci's Political Thought (on McNally's Edited Volume)*<sup>1</sup>

Francesca Antonini

The volume edited by Mark McNally, lecturer at the University of the West of Scotland, is an excellent example of the most recent literature on Antonio Gramsci. Among the collected volumes on the Italian thinker recently published in Anglophone academia, McNally's book is the only one that deals specifically with Gramscian political thought and its contemporary relevance.<sup>2</sup>

As clearly stated by the editor in the introduction (pp. 1-8), the primary scope of the volume is to explore "how Gramsci can continue to 'speak to us' today" (p. 5). Furthermore, it aims to "equip new readers [...] with an account of some of the major theoretical issues, debates and controversies that characterize his thought" and, at the same time, to raise the interest of "more seasoned Gramscian scholars" (*ibidem*).

In order to achieve this multiplicity of goals, the editor has gathered ten selected contributions by experienced Gramsci scholars with different backgrounds and from different generations.

The book is divided into four sections (*Historical context; Key debates; Major conceptual issues; Contemporary relevance*), followed by a closing chapter by McNally (*Conclusion: Contemporary themes*), in which he emphasizes the points of resonance of Gramscian themes in present times.<sup>3</sup> Parts I, II and III share a similar approach toward Gramsci's work and the issues raised here partially overlap. Part IV has a clearer identity and stands out as the most original section of the book.

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<sup>1</sup> Mark McNally (ed.), *Antonio Gramsci*, in the series "Critical Explorations in Contemporary Political Thought", Basingstoke, Palgrave Macmillan 2015, pp. XIII-247.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. Ives and Lacorte 2010; Mayo 2010; Green 2011; Srivastava and Bhattacharya 2012; Zene 2013; Ekers et al. 2012; Kreps 2015. A volume edited by Aaron Bernstein, Lorenzo Fusaro, Robert Jackson and myself is forthcoming with Brill.

<sup>3</sup> The volume contains also a general bibliography and a useful index. As to the general editing of the volume, however, there are unfortunately more than a few inaccuracies, especially with regard to Italian names and expressions (often misspelled, both in the chapters and in the index).

The first chapter of the volume deals with the political tactic of the United Front and reappraisal by Gramsci (*Gramsci, the United Front: Comintern and Democratic Strategy*, pp. 11-33). By effectively reassessing Anderson's focus on Gramsci's 'Eastern sources', Mark McNally connects the elaboration of a 'democratic' trend within Gramsci's thought to the inclusive political strategy from below promoted by the Comintern in the early 1920s. Even if some issues might have required a stronger problematization (e.g. the relationship with Gramsci's formula of "relations of force" and its forerunners and his unconventional reading of the category of democracy), this essay offers an original insight into a still under-explored aspect of Gramsci's political thought before his imprisonment.

The investigation of Gramsci's pre-prison experiences is a pivotal feature of the volume.<sup>4</sup> This attention to Gramsci's historical and political background is displayed clearly in the second chapter by James Martin (*Morbid Symptoms: Gramsci and the Crisis of Liberalism*, pp. 34-51). Martin aims at sketching Gramsci's reaction to the crisis of the liberal order and depicts Gramsci as a thinker of the "interregnum", as we may say, using a famous expression from the *Notebooks* (Q 3, § 34: cf. Gramsci 1996, pp. 32-33). Of particular interest is the comparison between Gramsci's and Gobetti's attitude toward the crisis of Italian liberalism in the aftermath of WWI (cf. in particular pp. 41-42); also fruitful is Martin's focus on Gramsci's "narrative of crisis" (p. 44), as it develops in his prison writings.

The essay by Benedetto Fontana (*Intellectuals and Masses: Agency and Knowledge in Gramsci*, pp. 55-75) reaches the core of Gramsci's political thought, insofar as it deals with the relationship between the people and the intellectuals, i.e. the issue of collective political organisms. In doing this the author relies on his previous Gramscian research, as to content and method.<sup>5</sup> Of course, this is a thorny issue, which is difficult to tackle within twenty pages, but a closer engagement with the recent literature on the topic might have led the author to a deeper analysis.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> While in Italy the pre-prison writings have remained for a long time in the shadow of the *Prison Notebooks*, in the Anglophone world Gramsci's production before 1927 experienced a precocious success among scholars, as demonstrated by the number of editions (cf. in particular Gramsci 1977-1978, Gramsci 1985 and Gramsci 1994) as well as by the flourishing secondary literature.

<sup>5</sup> Cf. in particular Fontana 2003.

<sup>6</sup> Despite a few important exceptions, Fontana's references are mostly outdated, neither

Chapter 4 is remarkable for its capacity to integrate different levels of investigation (*Gramsci, Language and Pluralism*, pp. 76-94). While investigating Gramsci's linguistic interests and background, Alessandro Carlucci shows how this affects his conception of politics. Furthermore, he offers a brief but extremely fruitful contextualization of the debate on Gramsci and pluralism (adding significantly to the picture outlined in chapter 2). He also discards – with sound reason – a recent interpretation put forward by Franco Lo Piparo.

The fifth and sixth chapters, written respectively by Peter D. Thomas (*Gramsci's Marxism: The 'Philosophy of Praxis'*, pp. 97-117) and Guido Liguori (*Conceptions of Subalternity in Gramsci*, pp. 118-133), provide a thorough insight into Gramsci's prison writings and track down the 'genealogy' of some of the political concepts here elaborated. Relying on the most advanced findings of Italian philology (concerning essentially a diachronic and philological reading of Gramsci's texts),<sup>7</sup> on the one hand Thomas highlights the multi-sided nature of the category of "philosophy of praxis"; on the other hand, Liguori tackles the concept of "subaltern/subalternity", which has experienced a late and wide-reaching fortune, but whose meaning still needs a substantial clarification.

To sum up, chapters 1-6 give a well thought-out account of various aspects of Gramsci's political thought. The contributions are different in many respects, both as regards their approach toward Gramsci's text (either philological or theoretical; focused either on the pre-prison writings or on the *Notebooks*, or on both) and as regards the reading they give of the debate on the individual topics, which is something highly desirable in an introductory volume such as this. Despite this heterogeneity, they represent a useful companion to Gramsci's conception of politics as well as the necessary counterpart to the texts gathered in the fourth part of the volume.

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taking into account the most recent developments in Italian philology (cf. *infra*, n. 7), nor its readings in the Anglophone world (cf. especially Thomas 2009, but also his most recent publications on the category of the Modern Prince – Thomas 2013a, 2013b and 2015).

<sup>7</sup> As is known, a new critical edition of Gramsci's writings is in preparation (2007-). Besides this, we may mention at least the project of the *Dizionario Gramsciano* (Liguori-Voza 2009) and the most recent Italian publications on Gramsci, some of them already translated into English (cf. among others Giasi 2008; Frosini 2010; Cospito 2011 and 2016; Liguori 2006 and 2015).

The distinction between sections 1-3 and 4 stands out clearly. On the one hand, in the essays already mentioned the attention to the contemporary relevance of Gramsci's reflections was juxtaposed to the investigation of his thought and more or less effectively integrated into the previous analysis. On the other hand, the very essence of chapters 7-10 is the effort to utilize Gramsci's reflections in order to deal with contemporary political issues. Thus, this updating is the key feature of the fourth part, whose focus is the legacy of Gramsci's thought in our times.

Each chapter adopts a different way to read Gramsci today. The seventh chapter, co-authored by Andreas Bieler, Ian Bruff and Adam David Morton, investigates the use of Gramsci within the research fields of International Relations (IR) and International Political Economy (IPE) (*Gramsci and 'the International': Past, Present and Future*, pp. 137-155). On the basis of a critical evaluation of Cox's path-breaking interventions in the 1980s and of the development of a neo-Gramscian trend in the 1990s, the authors (who are among the most authoritative representatives of this trend) offer a balanced and fruitful outlook on the topic. Their thesis is that a genuine global perspective is already present in Gramsci, since "particular histories exist only within the frame of world history", as they say picking up Gramsci's own words (p. 140). If there is no need to 'internationalize' Gramsci, the connection between the national and the supranational levels has to be sought within the Gramscian account. In particular, Bieler, Bruff and Morton identify the category of "passive revolution" as an essential conceptual tool to conceive the process of "uneven and combined development" (p. 141). Its importance "extends beyond his life-time to more recent periods in capitalist history" (p. 144), up to the actual neoliberal age, which is characterized by growing authoritarian features.

Chapter 8, by Marcus E. Green, investigates the positive aspect of Gramsci's thought, his 'revolutionary faith' and its fruitfulness for contemporary struggles (*Gramsci and Subaltern Struggles Today: Spontaneity, Political Organization and Occupy Wall Street*, pp. 156-178). Historical contextualization, philological investigation of Gramscian texts and a deep sensitivity to the most recent political developments are happily synthesized in this essay, which discusses the

concrete case-study of the Occupy Wall Street movement.<sup>8</sup> As regards the theoretical dimension of Green's chapter, the main novelty lies in his articulation of the category of subalternity. In fact, he does not conceive of it as an indivisible category, but as a "conceptual cluster", that keeps together different elements. In particular, he analyses two of them, "spontaneity" and "conscious leadership". Also noteworthy is the connection between themes already evoked in other chapters, such as democracy and liberalism.

The reflection on Gramsci as 'thinker of the crisis' returns in chapter 9, by Darrow Schecter (*The Historical Bloc: Toward a Typology of Weak States and Contemporary Legitimation Crises*, pp. 179-194). He aims to demonstrate the centrality of the category of "historical bloc" (conceived of as a development of the couple structure-superstructure) and its aptness for analysing the current political situation. In particular he affirms that Gramsci is a "historian of the instability of weak states" (p. 180), i. e. states, like Italy, "with inadequate constitutions in several senses of the term" (*ibidem*) and that "are far more likely [...] to undergo authoritarian transitions such as fascism and other kinds of passive revolution" (p. 181). From this point of view, the comparison between Gramsci and Foucault sketched by the author (p. 184) is pivotal.

The tenth chapter of the volume is written by David Howarth and is devoted to the investigation of the reappraisal of the Gramscian category of hegemony by Laclau and Mouffe (*Gramsci, Hegemony and Post-Marxism*, pp. 195-213). Although not dealing directly with Gramsci, the chapter is interesting insofar as it offers a balanced overview on one of the most successful political theories of the last few decades, which, in turn, might suggest innovative understandings of Gramsci's own thought.

The volume closes with a conclusion by the editor, in which he makes the point of the present-day significance of Gramsci's thought (*Conclusion: Contemporary Themes*, pp. 214-224). McNally identifies three main topics – *Contemporary Marxism* (pp. 214-216), *The Subaltern and Popular Movements* (pp. 216-219), *Democratic Theory and post-Marxism* (pp. 219-223) – around which he organizes a summary of the ten contributions of the book. This closing chapter

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<sup>8</sup> Kate Crehan, in her latest book on Gramsci, has also chosen Occupy Wall Street as a case-study to show the up-to-dateness of the Sardinian's categories (cf. Crehan 2016).

is without doubt useful and it opens the doors for a general investigation of the contemporaneity of Gramsci's thought. In particular, it stimulates reflections on the narrative that emerges from and connects the different chapters, in particular the ones that focus directly on the contemporary relevance of his account (7-10). Despite the differences among them, I am convinced that it is possible to track down at least one unifying *Leitmotiv*, represented by the category of hegemony and its transformations.<sup>9</sup>

As shown recently, far from being exhaustively explored in all its facets, this Gramscian macro-concept is still very fertile and deserves a thorough exploration.<sup>10</sup> It is not by chance that chapters 7-10 stress, even if sometimes only incidentally, the existence of a conception of hegemony that transcends its more traditional meaning, related to the 'long' nineteenth century and to the rise of the bourgeoisie and its rule over the other classes. This is only the first and most obvious application of this category in Gramsci's thought. In fact, the concept of hegemony evolves in parallel with his political reflections and it is equally employed to analyse both the past and the present situations, on an Italian, European or global level.

That means, first, that the social and political coordinates that characterize Gramsci's own time affect also the category of hegemony, which is used to understand the growing authoritarian characters of western societies and their 'democratic-bureaucratic' features.<sup>11</sup> This broader conception emerges clearly, for instance, from the last miscellaneous Notebooks – 14, 15, and 17 – whose importance is still under-estimated.<sup>12</sup> This further meaning of hegemony could be very fruitfully extended to our own times, by

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<sup>9</sup> Another *Leitmotiv* is for example the concept of 'crisis'.

<sup>10</sup> For an overview on the debate on Gramsci's category of hegemony cf. now Liguori 2015, pp. 176-191. For the latest achievements of the scholarship on the topic cf. among others Frosini 2016, Cospito 2016 (these essays are the results of the first edition of the Ghilarza Summer School, held in Sardinia in September 2014 and focused on the concepts of hegemony and subalternity). The category of hegemony was at the centre of a series of international workshops organised by Fabio Frosini and other scholars from 2014 to 2016 (*Egemonia dopo Gramsci: una riconsiderazione / Hegemony after Gramsci: a new assessment*).

<sup>11</sup> For the 'democratic-bureaucratic' features of hegemony cf. again Frosini 2016: for the term itself, see Gramsci 1975, Q 8, § 22 and Q 12, § 1; in English Gramsci 2007, p. 250 and Gramsci 1971, p. 13..

<sup>12</sup> As regards Notebooks 14, 15 and 17, a path-breaking investigation was conducted in a seminar recently held in Urbino, Italy (*Verso la nuova edizione critica dei "Quaderni del carcere" di Antonio Gramsci: gli ultimi quaderni miscellanei (1933-1935)*).

making this concept a key to interpret the social and political trends we are experiencing; trends that could be compared, *mutatis mutandis*, with the ones described by Gramsci.

As Bieler, Bruff and Morton affirm, “Gramsci would be interested in the rise of the authoritarian neoliberalism” that “would remind him of the 1920s and 1930s” and their “series of counter-revolutions” (p. 149).<sup>13</sup> Green writes: “One of the major lessons that can be drawn from OWS [Occupy Wall Street] and Occupy, following a Gramscian analysis, is the state’s readiness to utilize surveillance, the use of force and coercion to disrupt and suppress an explicitly nonviolent political movement” (p. 171). Schechter’s parallel between Gramsci and Foucault is eloquent from this point of view, stressing “the rise of de-centered, transnational, biopolitical instances of control and surveillance”, p. 184).<sup>14</sup> Finally Howarth, too, wants a return to the category of hegemony, not limited either to the level of the superstructure or to that of the structure, but, “in the spirit of Gramsci’s dialectical thinking”, in the framework of “more complex conceptual infrastructures”, at the same time as recovering “questions of coercion, violence and imposition” (p. 209). For their part, chapters 1-6 provide the necessary basis for an investigation of this broader conception of hegemony and for a useful application of it to our times.

To conclude, in the panorama of recent Anglophone literature on Gramsci, McNally’s book is an excellent example of non-occasional reflection on Gramsci as a ‘classic’ of political thought, absolutely noteworthy in itself but perhaps even more for its echoes in the present. The chapters included in the volume, although different as regards their topics and their approach toward Gramsci’s thought, could lay the foundations for thorough exploration of Gramsci’s contemporary relevance, by fulfilling the

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<sup>13</sup> The authors stress the coercive dimension of political action in the “post-2007 period of crisis”, interpreted as an effort of neoliberal ideology to remain the “dominant discourse” (p. 148). In particular they highlight the increased level of state repression and the fact that “justifications of political violence and the mobilization of juridical power have become a routine part of events across the globe” (p. 149).

<sup>14</sup> Cf. also: “One finds similar spatial models of power and resistance throughout Gramsci’s works. His writings manifest a similar impulse to deconstruct what are often assumed to be unified concentrations of power, such as ‘the state’, which he breaks down into civil society and political society. [...] power relations in complex societies are constituted in capillary channels that do not respect near boundaries or mechanical models of causality” (p. 184).



ambitions expressed in the conclusion of the volume.

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