



UNIVERSITY
OF WOLLONGONG
AUSTRALIA

International Gramsci Journal

Volume 2

Issue 4 *Readings and Applications of Gramsci / The
National Edition of Gramsci's Writings*

Article 1

2018

Cover Page

Fabio Frosini

Follow this and additional works at: <http://ro.uow.edu.au/gramsci>

Recommended Citation

Frosini, Fabio, Cover Page, *International Gramsci Journal*, 2(4), 2018.
Available at: <http://ro.uow.edu.au/gramsci/vol2/iss4/1>

Research Online is the open access institutional repository for the University of Wollongong. For further information contact the UOW Library:
research-pubs@uow.edu.au

Cover Page

Abstract

Cover Page

Keywords

Cover Page

INTERNATIONAL GRAMSCI JOURNAL

Vol. 2, No. 4 (Second Series / Seconda Serie)
June / Giugno 2018

READINGS AND APPLICATIONS OF GRAMSCI THE NATIONAL EDITION OF GRAMSCI'S WRITINGS



Ringraziamo la Biblioteca Franco Serantini (archivio e centro di documentazione di storia sociale e contemporanea, Pisa) per il gentile permesso di riprodurre l'immagine di questo invito (cfr. i contributi in questo numero di Giovanna Savant) / We wish to thank the Biblioteca Franco Serantini (social and contemporary history archive and documentation centre, Pisa) for kind permission to reproduce this invitation (see Giovanna Savant's contributions in this issue)

ISSN: 1836-6554

INTERNATIONAL GRAMSCI SOCIETY

International Gramsci Journal

Volume 2
Issue 4 *Readings and Applications of Gramsci /*
The National Edition of Gramsci's Writings

Article 2

2018

Table of contents

Fabio Frosini

Follow this and additional works at: <https://ro.uow.edu.au/gramsci>

Recommended Citation

Frosini, Fabio, Table of contents, *International Gramsci Journal*, 2(4), 2018.

Available at: <https://ro.uow.edu.au/gramsci/vol2/iss4/2>

Research Online is the open access institutional repository for the University of Wollongong. For further information contact the UOW Library: research-pubs@uow.edu.au

Table of contents

Abstract

Table of contents

Keywords

Table of contents

Issue:

Readings and Applications of Gramsci
The National Edition of Gramsci's Writings

Editorial

Derek Boothman 1

Part I: Readings and applications of Gramsci

1. Javier Balsa
La crítica al objetivismo y la propuesta epistemológico-política contenida en el Cuaderno 11
(en español) 3

2. Jonas Sylvest
Labour Movements and State Formation in Turkey: Passive Revolution and Uneven Development
(in English) 37

Part II: The National Edition of Antonio Gramsci's Writings

3. Giovanna Savant
Scritti (1910-1926). Vol. 2, Scritti 1917, a cura di Leonardo Rapone (in italiano) 83

4. Giovanna Savant
Scritti [Writings] (1910-1926). Vol. 2, Scritti [Writings] 1917, Leonardo Rapone (ed.)
(in English) 116

5. Birgit Wagner
Quaderni di traduzioni (1929-1932) [Translation Notebooks (1929-1932)], 2 vols,
Giuseppe Cospito and Gianni Francioni (eds) (in English) 151

6. Lelio La Porta
Epistolario, Vol. 2, maggio 1922-novembre 1923, a cura di Davide Bidussa,
Francesco Giasi e Maria Luisa Righi (in italiano) 156

7. Lelio La Porta
Correspondence, Vol. 2, May 1922-November 1923, Davide Bidussa,
Francesco Giasi and Maria Luisa Righi (eds) (in English) 163

Part III: Review

8. Nerio Naldi
Giancarlo de Vivo: *Nella bufera del Novecento: Antonio Gramsci e Piero Sraffa tra lotta politica e teoria critica* [*In the Storm of the Twentieth Century. Antonio Gramsci and Piero Sraffa between Political Struggle and Critical Theory*] (in English) 171

INTERNATIONAL GRAMSCI JOURNAL

ISSN: 1836-6554

Editorial Board / Comitato scientifico

- Ursula Apitzsch, Deutschland
- Javier Balsa, Argentina
- † Giorgio Baratta, Italia
- Alvaro Bianchi, Brasil
- Derek Boothman, Italia
- Raúl Burgos, Brasil
- Joseph A. Buttigieg, U.S.A.
- Martin Cortés, Argentina
- Giuseppe Cospito, Italia
- † Carlos N. Coutinho, Brasil
- Marcos Del Roio, Brasil
- Romain Descendre, France
- Alessandro Errico, Italia
- Benedetto Fontana, U.S.A.
- Gianni Francioni, Italia
- Fabio Frosini, Italia/España
- Nichole Georgeou, Australia
- Nigel Greaves, Κύπρος (Kúpros)
- Marcus E. Green, U.S.A.
- Charles Hawksley, Australia
- Renate Holub, U.S.A.
- Richard Howson, Australia
- Peter Ives, Canada
- † Domenico Jervolino, Italia
- Juha Koivisto, Suomi-Finland
- Guido Liguori, Italia
- Peter Mayo, Malta
- Rita Medici, Italia
- Massimo Modonesi, México
- Adam D. Morton, Australia
- Kôichi Ohara, Japan
- David F. Ruccio, U.S.A.
- Anne Showstack Sassoon, Britain
- Giovanni Semeraro, Brasil
- Kylie Smith, Australia
- Panagiotis Sotiris, Ἑλλάς (Hellás)
- Peter D. Thomas, Britain
- † André Tosel, France
- Birgit Wagner, Austria
- Jean-Claude Zancarini, France

Editorial committee / Comitato redazionale

Derek Boothman (editor / direttore)
Giuseppe Cospito
Alessandro Errico (technical editor / direttore tecnico)
Fabio Frosini (adviser / consigliere)
Marcus E. Green
Peter D. Thomas

International Gramsci Journal

Volume 2
Issue 4 *Readings and Applications of Gramsci /*
The National Edition of Gramsci's Writings

Article 3

2018

Editorial

Derek Boothman

Follow this and additional works at: <https://ro.uow.edu.au/gramsci>

Recommended Citation

Boothman, Derek, Editorial, *International Gramsci Journal*, 2(4), 2018, 1-2.
Available at: <https://ro.uow.edu.au/gramsci/vol2/iss4/3>

Research Online is the open access institutional repository for the University of Wollongong. For further information contact the UOW Library: research-pubs@uow.edu.au

Editorial

Abstract

Editorial

Keywords

Editorial

Editorial

Issue number 8 of the “International Gramsci Journal” falls into three main parts. We begin with the article in Spanish by Javier Balsa (Argentina), who gives a detailed reading of Gramsci’s critique in Notebook 11 of scientism and vulgar materialism, notably of Bukharin’s and similar approaches. Drawing out the implications, Balsa links this analysis to questions of political practice and the position of the subalterns. As elsewhere, editorial square-bracketed additions are included as an aid to trace references to standard Italian volumes of Gramsci, notably to Gerratana’s 1975 *Critical Edition* of the *Quaderni del carcere*.

Different from Balsa’s analysis, the English-language article of Jonas Sylvest (Denmark) applies Gramscian notions, “passive revolution” and “integral state” in particular, together with Trotsky’s concept of uneven and combined development, to the politico-economic situation and trade-union/workers’ movement in Turkey, in the thirty years after 1950, from when the Kemalist Republican People’s Party (CHP) first lost power to its gradual transformation into a social-democratic party.

In the second part of this issue, we begin articles on the volumes of the *National Edition of Gramsci’s Writings*, sponsored by Rome’s Fondazione Istituto Gramsci and published by the Istituto della Enciclopedia Italiana. Giovanna Savant (Italy) discusses in detail Gramsci’s journalistic output in her review of *Scritti 1917 (Writings 1917)*, authoritatively edited by Leonardo Rapone; the volume includes articles newly attributed to Gramsci, while excluding others previously thought to be by him. Then, leaving aside for a later issue of the IGJ the volume of the *Epistolario (Correspondence)* dealing with Gramsci’s early life, Lelio La Porta (Italy) deals with the key period, from January to November 1923, spent as the PCI’s main representative at the Comintern. The correspondence contains letters both written and received by Gramsci, including a number that he wrote that are here published for the first time (most of these also available in the English edition of the pre-prison letters). Some of the letters, previously thought to be to Julija (Jul’ka), are now known to have been addressed to Evgenija, her elder sister; readers are therefore left in no doubt that, until Jul’ka appeared, Gramsci’s love interest in Moscow was first directed towards Evgenija.

These above-mentioned articles are in Italian and English, while Birgit Wagner (Austria) contributes one in English on the volumes in the *National Edition*, dedicated to the translation notebooks (A, B, C and D) written by Gramsci before he was granted permission to write what all now know as the *Prison Notebooks*. Aspects discussed include his translation strategies (especially for the folk tales of the Brothers Grimm), translation in literal and metaphorical senses, and the status of these notebooks within the prison writings. To the names of the IGJ collaborators whom Wagner mentions on translation, we here add our editorial homage to the late Domenico Jervolino, member of our scientific committee and author of a widely read IGJ article on translation.

The third part of this number of the Journal is dedicated to the review of a book *on*, rather than *of*, Gramsci. This is the article¹ by Nerio Naldi (Italy) on the volume by the economist, Giancarlo de Vivo, *Nella bufera del Novecento (In the Storm of the Twentieth Century)*. Recently, Italy has seen polemics, not widely known abroad, on certain aspects of Gramsci's prison life and on the nature of attempts to lessen his sentence. Here Naldi, the major expert together with de Vivo on the relationship between Gramsci and Piero Sraffa, tackles key subjects including Sraffa as the main channel between Gramsci and the Italian Party leadership in exile, and the role that Sraffa, the prisoner's intellectual mainstay, played in attempts to reduce Gramsci's sentence. Unlike some authors in the recent polemics, de Vivo uses the documentary evidence with great care and scrupulousness, demonstrating Sraffa's ability to follow Gramsci's wishes and, when necessary, to take decisions independent of the positions of the PCI and the Comintern. Other important aspects dealt with include Gramsci's and Sraffa's stances on the philosophy of praxis, and some of Sraffa's first steps in mounting his challenge to orthodox, neoclassical economics.

Taken together, the volumes discussed in parts 2 and 3 of this number of the journal shed new light on Gramsci as political philosopher, as politico and, not least, as man. Sections of forthcoming issues of the IGJ will also be devoted to discussion articles regarding other relevant aspects, some newly found, of Gramsci's biography.

¹ We publish this book review in English by kind permission of "Moneta e Credito", who include the Italian-language version in their Vol. 71, no. 283, available at www.monetaecredito.info.

International Gramsci Journal

Volume 2
Issue 4 *Readings and Applications of Gramsci /*
The National Edition of Gramsci's Writings

Article 4

2018

La crítica al objetivismo y la propuesta epistemológico-política contenida en el Cuaderno 11 (en español)

Javier Balsa

Follow this and additional works at: <https://ro.uow.edu.au/gramsci>

Recommended Citation

Balsa, Javier, La crítica al objetivismo y la propuesta epistemológico-política contenida en el Cuaderno 11 (en español), *International Gramsci Journal*, 2(4), 2018, 3-36.

Available at: <https://ro.uow.edu.au/gramsci/vol2/iss4/4>

Research Online is the open access institutional repository for the University of Wollongong. For further information contact the UOW Library: research-pubs@uow.edu.au

La crítica al objetivismo y la propuesta epistemológico-política contenida en el Cuaderno 11 (en español)

Abstract

En este artículo se analiza la relación entre objetividad, ciencia y práctica política, a partir de una relectura de los Cuadernos de la cárcel, de Antonio Gramsci, haciendo particular hincapié en el Cuaderno 11. En este sentido, se aborda, en primer lugar, su crítica al fetichismo de la ciencia, al objetivismo y al materialismo vulgar. En segundo lugar, se analiza su propuesta de una nueva síntesis (basada en un trabajo sobre el sentido común) y el tipo de intelectuales orgánicos necesarios para desarrollar este trabajo ideológico. En tercer lugar, se estudia la articulación que Gramsci establece entre determinismo y pasividad de los subalternos. Para finalizar, se aborda la forma en que Gramsci reconoce la tensión entre ideología y ciencia, entre objetividad y subjetividad, y cómo, para él, esta misma tensión repercute sobre la práctica de la lucha ideológica.

In questo articolo si propone un'analisi della relazione tra l'oggettività, la scienza e la pratica politica sulla base di una rilettura dei Quaderni del carcere di Antonio Gramsci, incentrata in particolare nel Quaderno 11. Pertanto, si propone anzitutto una ricostruzione della critica gramsciana del feticismo della scienza, dell'oggettivismo e del materialismo volgare. In secondo luogo, si esamina la sua proposta di una nuova sintesi (poggiante sul lavoro sul senso comune) e il tipo di intellettuali organici indispensabili allo sviluppo di questo lavoro ideologico. In terzo luogo, si studia l'articolazione che Gramsci istituisce tra il determinismo e la passività dei subalterni. Infine, si prende in considerazione il modo in cui Gramsci riconosce l'esistenza di una tensione tra ideologia e scienza, tra oggettività e soggettività, e come, secondo lui, questa stessa tensione si ripercuota sulla pratica della lotta ideologica.

This article analyses the relationship between objectivity, science and political practice based on a re-reading of especially Notebook 11 of Antonio Gramsci's Prison Notebooks. In the first place, we put forward a reconstruction of his critique of science, objectivism and vulgar materialism. Secondly, we examine his proposal for a new synthesis, based on his work on common sense, and the type of organic intellectuals necessary for the development of this ideological work. Thirdly, we study the articulation that Gramsci establishes between determinism and the passivity of the subalterns. Last, we consider the way in which Gramsci recognizes the existence of a tension between ideology and science, between objectivity and subjectivity, and how, in his view, this self-same tension has its repercussions on the practice of ideological struggle.

Keywords

Objetivismo; ciencia; práctica política; trabajo ideológico; subalternos; Cuaderno 11; Oggettività; scienza; pratica politica; lavoro ideologico; subalterni; Quaderno 11; Objectivity; science; political practice; ideological work; subalterns; Notebook 11

La crítica al objetivismo y la propuesta epistemológico-política contenida en el Cuaderno 11

Javier Balsa

1. Introducción

Hasta hace pocas décadas, parecía que la práctica revolucionaria requería certezas para guiar su acción, pero también muchos creían que estas certezas estaban disponibles para quien supiese leer “el curso de la historia”. Por ejemplo, certeza de que “la teoría” brindaba una estrategia política correcta, certeza de que el capitalismo (a pesar de todas las fortalezas que había demostrado) sería próximamente derrotado, certeza de que las masas se sumarían al proceso revolucionario, y así podríamos continuar con una serie de certezas que a muchos les parecían imprescindibles para continuar la lucha. Pero, todas estas certezas “se desvanecieron en el aire”, e incluso la propia idea de certeza, parece hoy muy equivocada. Es que, tal vez, ahí estaba justamente el problema: pretender que la teoría podía brindarnos certezas, verdades eternas, cuando un enfoque epistemológico correcto, tendría que habernos alertado del error de estas vanas esperanzas. El propio Engels, en *Ludwig Feuerbach y el fin de la filosofía clásica alemana*, destacaba que “como el mundo no puede concebirse como un conjunto de *cosas* terminadas, sino como un conjunto de *procesos*”, entonces hay que rechazar, “de una vez para siempre”, “la exigencia de soluciones definitivas y verdades eternas”. En cambio, “todos los conocimientos que obtengamos serán forzosamente limitados y se hallarán condicionados por las circunstancias en las cuales los obtenemos” (Engels 1975 [1886]: 63). El desarrollo de la epistemología posterior al Círculo de Viena, pasó a avalar, en líneas generales y desde distintas perspectivas, este tipo de apreciaciones. Sin embargo, como ya señalaba Engels, “una cosa es reconocerla de palabra y otra cosa es aplicarla a la realidad concreta, en todos los campos sometidos a investigación” (Engels 1975 [1886]: 63).

Una limitación que la podemos observar no solo en la concepción de la ciencia que posee el sentido común, sino en que esta perspectiva positivista se encuentra fuertemente enraizada en la mayoría de la práctica científica realmente existente.

Incluso, buena parte del marxismo ignoró esta problemática, refugiándose en ciertos dogmatismos, por el temor de que una relativización de “las verdades”, una devaluación del estatuto “científico del marxismo”, condujera a la pérdida de una guía clara sobre qué hacer y una desmoralización de la militancia por la falta de certidumbres acerca del futuro. Tal vez la mayor expresión de esta actitud fueron los planteos de Althusser de los años sesenta, para quien el marxismo se distinguiría por su cientificidad, con total independencia de su verificación en la práctica política de la historia: “el criterio de la ‘verdad’ de los conocimientos producidos por la práctica teórica de Marx es proporcionado por la práctica teórica misma” (Althusser y Balibar 1985, p. 66). Elaboraciones que se oponían, en este punto, frontalmente a los escritos de Gramsci.¹

La crisis de estas perspectivas dogmáticas ha conducido a dos tipos de salidas negacionistas del problema. En primer lugar, encontramos una deriva extrema del academicismo marxista que se refugia en la relectura, contextualización histórica e interpretación precisa de los textos de los autores “clásicos” (e incluso no tan “clásicos”) del marxismo. Con este recorte del problema de conocimiento se consigue acceder a cierta idea de “certeza”, pero reducida a lo que dijeron o quisieron decir estos autores en el pasado; es decir, evitando el problema de la relación con lo que ocurre hoy en el mundo, ya que no hablan de nuestro mundo, sino de un mundo pasado, recortado, a su vez, a una historia intelectual, o de los intelectuales.

¹ Althusser propuso “salvar” aquello que el historicismo de Gramsci contenía, para él, de auténtico, para lo cual habría que “evitar a cualquier precio, comprometerlo con las ideologías relativistas (burguesas) del conocimiento, que creen poder dar cuenta de un contenido teórico objetivo (conocimiento científico *verdadero* o tesis filosófica *justa*) reduciéndolo exclusivamente a sus condiciones ‘históricas’” (Althusser y Balibar 1985, p. 17). Un desarrollo más exhaustivo de estas cuestiones se encuentra en el capítulo “El marxismo no es un historicismo” (Althusser y Balibar 1985, pp. 130-56). Acerca de las lecturas de Gramsci realizadas por Althusser y sus elaboraciones a partir de ellas, puede consultarse Thomas (2009) y Morfino (2016). Thomas (2009, p. 34) destaca que Althusser nunca se retractó explícitamente de las críticas que había formulado a Gramsci en *Para leer El Capital*.

Esto no implica que muchos de estos intelectuales no militen en fuerzas políticas de izquierda, pero, en general, lo hacen de forma disociada de su papel de académicos: es muy difícil (salvo algunas excepciones) encontrar vínculos explícitos entre sus trabajos sobre la historia del marxismo, y los debates sobre la estrategia o la táctica de las fuerzas a las que están vinculados desarrollan o deberían desarrollar.²

Esta disociación a nivel individual se vincula con la negación del problema de la relación entre saber y práctica marxista, aquella que se verifica en la dinámica de muchas fuerzas políticas de izquierda, que no articulan las elaboraciones teóricas y sus prácticas centradas en “la lucha”. Es sintomático que buena parte de las muy valorables (por ser en general hoy escasas) elaboraciones y publicaciones teóricas de estas fuerzas políticas, no reflexionan teóricamente acerca de la práctica política. Incluso más, muchas de las fuerzas de izquierda ya no realizan elaboraciones teóricas de ningún tipo, y se centran en la práctica (tal vez como reacción al academicismo marxista del que habláramos antes).³

En segundo lugar, tenemos otro tipo de reacciones frente a la crisis de las certezas, la de aquellos/as que, ya explícita o implícitamente, han abandonado la lucha anticapitalista: la resignación a aceptar que la política no puede salir de los límites de la sociedad capitalista, y vinculado a esta actitud, el despliegue de un tacticismo, en términos de ocupar “espacios de poder”, sin saber mucho para qué. Pero esta preocupación por las tácticas, desvinculadas de la reflexión estratégica, ni siquiera ha servido para cumplir con su propósito de mantener el poder estatal. Sin una guía que conduzca a la profundización del proceso emancipatorio y/o a la construcción de deseos utópicos colectivos, los procesos de reformas se agotan en la defensa de lo ya conquistado; es decir, pasan a una actitud defensiva que, tarde o temprano, deviene en derrota/derrotismo, como hemos visto en algunos de los procesos latinoamericanos contemporáneos (Balsa 2016).

² Sin embargo, consideramos que, por ejemplo, las nuevas lecturas de la obra de Gramsci proveen de interesantes elementos para repensar la estrategia política, tal como hemos procurado detallar en Balsa (2018).

³ Es cierto que esta confianza en que la práctica de lucha alcanza para desarrollar un proceso emancipatorio se encuentra en las primeras obras de Marx, sin embargo claramente ya no a partir de *El 18 Brumario de Luis Bonaparte*, ver al respecto Frosini (2009b) y Balsa (2014).

Es por eso que, en momentos de retroceso de los procesos políticos de izquierda y centro-izquierda en América Latina, urge repensar una serie de cuestiones centrales de la estrategia política y para ello, necesitamos de la teoría, pero de una teoría con una perspectiva crítica, abierta a los aportes de distintas tradiciones de pensamiento y a la reflexión a partir de lo acontecido en las experiencias concretas de estos últimos años. Por eso reaparece el debate acerca del lugar de la teoría, de la entidad del marxismo, de su científicidad y del tipo de conocimiento que puede proveer. En particular, la relación entre objetividad, verdades y práctica revolucionaria.⁴ Por lo tanto, quiero en este trabajo abordar esta relación a partir del texto que, a mi entender con mayor claridad ha ido hasta la raíz del problema: el undécimo *Cuaderno de la cárcel* de Antonio Gramsci. Para evitar caer en la crítica que acabo de formular, necesito aclarar que no busco en Gramsci la “autoridad” que valide muy apreciaciones. Por el contrario, la operación de “volver a Gramsci” se fundamenta en que considero que él ha ido hasta el fondo de la cuestión. Por lo tanto, recuperar sus elaboraciones permite sistematizar mejor el debate y diseñar una línea de acción teórica que transite lo que, como veremos, son tensiones ineludibles pero que no tienen por qué conducir a la parálisis política.

De modo que, a lo largo de este artículo, abordaré las tensiones entre verdad y relatividad, entre ideología y ciencia, entre objetividad y subjetividad y la ventaja de mantenerlas siempre vivas contra el peligro del dogmatismo. Para lo cual reordenaré algunas elaboraciones de Gramsci contenidas principalmente en el Cuaderno 11, titulado “Introducción al estudio de la filosofía”.⁵ Prestaremos especial atención a la problemática de las ciencias sociales o humanas, dejando

⁴ Si Gramsci, retomando a Rosa Luxemburgo, decía que existe una “imposibilidad de afrontar ciertas cuestiones de la filosofía de la praxis en cuanto que estas todavía no se han vuelto *actuales* para el curso de la historia general o de un determinado agrupamiento social” (CC11 § 65, tomo 4, p. 337 [Gerratana p. 1493]), en las últimas décadas se han vuelto *actuales* una serie de problemáticas que urge que sean abordadas. Es que, por haber dejado de lado varios debates, como los de la transición al socialismo, la caracterización del Estado, el lugar de la ciencia, entre otras temáticas, las cuestiones no se han solucionado.

⁵ Toda indicación de apartados (§) y páginas a lo largo de este trabajo, si no se indica otra obra, hace referencia al “Cuaderno 11” editado en el tomo 4 de la traducción al castellano de los *Cuadernos de la Cárcel*, publicada por la editorial mexicana Era, basada, a su vez, en la edición italiana realizada por Valentino Gerratana (Gramsci 1986 [1975]). En algunos casos, que se indican expresamente, se realizan referencias a otros tomos de la misma edición realizada en México.

un tanto de lado la cuestión de las ciencias naturales y las exactas. Pues, como ya había señalado Guiducci, para Gramsci “la filosofía de la praxis no implica la constitución de una única ciencia que comprenda incluso a las ciencias experimentales”. Aunque aclara que “esta limitación no disminuye el valor del materialismo histórico, en cuanto abarca todo el campo de la investigación humana en una perspectiva historicista general”, e, incluso, “se ocupa de los resultados de las ciencias naturales-experimentales en su traducción sociopolítica en fuerzas de producción, y además coopera por su mejor desarrollo” (Guiducci 1955).

Somos conscientes de que reordenar implica interpretar. Y esta será una línea de interpretación en la que no estarán ausente la lectura de diversas elaboraciones de otros autores/as, pero también de los procesos latinoamericanos de las últimas décadas. En particular, entonces, será una interpretación guiada por la búsqueda de abordar una problemática que nos urge para poder conocer el presente y trazar estrategias para transformarlo.

2. Contra el fetichismo de la ciencia

Gramsci realiza una crítica directa a la idea de que las verdades científicas puedan ser “definitivas”, pues ello implicaría un inmovilismo contradictorio con la propia dinámica científica: “si las verdades científicas fuesen definitivas, la ciencia habría dejado de existir como tal” (§37, p. 308 [Gerratana p. 1456]). Pero va más allá en su crítica al cientificismo, y pregona que hay que “destruir críticamente” el “concepto mismo de ciencia”, en tanto ha sido tomado enteramente de las ciencias naturales. Gramsci incluso va a criticar el “casi fetichismo” de las ciencias “exactas o físicas” que ocurre dentro del propio marxismo:

...el valor de las ciencias llamadas exactas o físicas y con la posición que éstas han venido asumiendo en el cuadro de la filosofía de la praxis como un casi fetichismo, incluso como la única y auténtica filosofía o conocimiento del mundo (§17, pp. 274-5 [Gerratana, p. 1413]).

Recordar que ya a fines de 1917, en “La revolución contra ‘El Capital’”, Gramsci criticaba la presencia de “incrustaciones positivistas y naturalistas” en la obra del propio Marx, al señalar que los bolcheviques vivían “el pensamiento marxista, el que nunca muere, que es la continuación del pensamiento idealista italiano y alemán, y que en Marx se había contaminado con incrustaciones positivistas y naturalistas.” (Gramsci 2004/1917, p. 35; [Gramsci 2015, pp. 617-21]).

En los *Cuadernos*, Gramsci señala que lo que denomina “superstición científica” surge de que, junto al “entusiasmo por las ciencias, existe en realidad la mayor ignorancia de los hechos y los métodos científicos”, ya que estos métodos resultan cada vez más complejos. Y destaca que esta superstición científica conduce a “ilusiones tan ridículas y concepciones tan infantiles que la misma superstición religiosa resulta ennoblecida” (§39, p. 310 [Gerratana, p. 1458]).

Es que, para Gramsci “también la ciencia es una superestructura, una ideología” (§38: 309 [Gerratana, p. 1457]). Esta ideología científica tiende a absolutizar sus pensamientos y a presentar su saber como el único válido: “Para los esperantistas de la filosofía y de la ciencia, todo lo que no es expresado en su lenguaje es delirio, es prejuicio, es superstición, etcétera” (§45, p. 317 [Gerratana, p. 1467]). Este error surge, según Gramsci, a partir de “no comprenderse la historicidad de los lenguajes y por lo tanto de las filosofías, de las ideologías y de las opiniones científicas”, lo cual promueve a que estas formas de pensamiento tiendan a “construirse a sí mismas como un esperanto o volapük de la filosofía y de la ciencia” (§45, p. 316 [Gerratana, p. 1466]).

Sin embargo, identificar ciencia con ideología no implica necesariamente una visión negativa de la misma.⁶ Es que, por un lado, como afirma Frosini, Gramsci había logrado sustraer el concepto de ideología de su acepción meramente negativa, y revincularlo con la verdad e, incluso con el poder -“inmanencia del pensamiento” (Frosini 2010, p. 22).

⁶ Por su parte, Boothman afirma que la posición epistemológica de Gramsci es de avanzada para su tiempo y que puede ser vinculada con la desarrollada a partir de 1960 por T.S. Kuhn (Boothman 2009, p. 749).

Además, por otro lado, Gramsci ubica a “la ciencia experimental” como “la subjetividad más objetivada y universalizada concretamente” (§17, p. 277 [Gerratana, p. 1416]). El lugar reservado a la experimentación, que en las ciencias sociales remitiría al estudio comparado, permite pensar la ciencia como un proceso de aproximaciones hacia saberes cada vez más cercanos a construir una imagen que pudiera dar mejor cuenta de la realidad. Para Gramsci, la experimentación científica es una práctica en la cual sujeto y objeto tienden a converger. Como señala Guiducci (1955), la ciencia es un instrumento del hombre que permite alcanzar el carácter de objetividad, pero no en el plano ontológico-metafísico, sino en el del acuerdo humano, estrechamente ligado al trabajo humano mismo. Y, en esta línea, Gramsci sostiene que “un grupo social puede apropiarse la ciencia de otro grupo sin aceptar la ideología” (§38, p. 310 [Gerratana, p. 1458]).⁷ Por lo cual existiría cierta posibilidad de abstraer elementos válidos de la ciencia producida en el marco ideológico de un determinado grupo, e incluirlos dentro de la propia elaboración científica. En palabras de Vacca, Gramsci no niega que haya “un común denominador de la ciencia empírica, pero esto es concebible solo como una ‘metodología genérica y universal’, no utilizable heurísticamente en modo directo y específico” (Vacca 2017, p. 170).

Según Rossi (2013) Gramsci procura construir el fundamento de un moderno humanismo histórico-científico, opuesto tanto al idealismo como al marxismo “ortodoxo”. De modo que la lucha por la apropiación de la ciencia es una batalla que el nuevo sujeto histórico debe llevar adelante para desmitificar la presunta neutralidad de esta actividad humana, lo que en términos filosófico-políticos significa superar la división social (burguesa) entre intelectuales (especialistas-científicos) y simples trabajadores. A esta desmitificación está vinculada la lucha por un nuevo tipo de objetividad humana (objetividad-subjetividad objetivada) y el relativo criterio de verdad que

⁷ En este sentido, Gramsci comparte la crítica al “cientificismo” pero la defensa de la “ciencia” y del trabajo del científico, y al “proceso general del pensamiento humano que se desarrolla y que alcanza siempre una mejor conciencia de sí” que había realizado Togliatti en su apostilla al artículo de Missiroli sobre la ciencia (donde identificaba la ciencia con la burguesía) que publicaran en *L'Ordine Nuovo* (Missiroli 1919). De todos modos, los tres comparten la crítica a la difusión y enseñanza de la ciencia de modo dogmático y propio de la dominación “desde lo alto”.

no es de tipo lógico-ontológico-convencional sino práctico-social y entonces controlable desde la totalidad de los sujetos (clase) a paridad de condiciones de verificación (Rossi 2013, pp. 139-40). Una propuesta que busca superar la incomprensión de la relación sujeto/objeto que es tanto propia del subjetivismo como del materialismo vulgar, incapaces de considerar la actividad humana sensible y que es la praxis la que produce estos dos elementos (Rossi 2013, pp. 162).

Por lo tanto, no hay en Gramsci una visión solamente negativa sobre la ciencia, sino que presenta una visión dual; lo que critica es la entronización de la “ciencia” como productora de verdades inmutables. Por eso, como sostiene Guiducci (1955), la actividad científico-experimental no debe conducir a una actitud de confort psicológico de certezas.

Esta confrontación con el cientificismo se enmarca en la crítica a Bujarin por haber planteado mal, y conducido peor, la “polémica contra la concepción subjetivista de la realidad”, que abordaremos a continuación. Hay que recordar que buena parte de las reflexiones contenidas en el Cuaderno 11 están escritas en la forma de un contrapunto con el *Ensayo popular de sociología marxista* (Bujarin 1972 [1921]).⁸

3. La crítica al “objetivismo” y la hegemonía como constructora de “verdades”

Gramsci formula una crítica frontal al concepto de “objetividad”. Y en este punto, propone una visión que hoy llamaríamos “constructivista” de lo objetivo. Gramsci sostiene que lo que se considera como “objetivo” es simplemente el producto de la imposición de ciertos consensos que quedan fuera de discusión.

⁸ Gramsci había usado este mismo manual en la escuela de formación interna del Partido Comunista, pero en los *Cuadernos* somete este texto a una crítica demoledora (Frosini 2009a, p. 88). Según Rossi (2013, p. 157) las críticas no solo se dirigen a Bujarin, sino también al Lenin de *Materialismo y empiriocriticismo*. En similar sentido, Buci-Glucksmann (1978: 266) había llamado la atención al “silencio” que Gramsci había realizado en los *Cuadernos* en relación a esta obra de Lenin, que, al parecer, había leído, y había planteado la hipótesis de que a la misma debería deberse la afirmación de Gramsci de que si un hombre político escribe un libro de filosofía, puede ocurrir que su verdadera filosofía deba extraerse de sus escritos políticos.

Afirma que “‘objetivo’ significa precisa y únicamente esto: que se afirma ser objetivo, realidad objetiva, aquella realidad que es establecida por todos los hombres, que es independiente de todo punto de vista simplemente particular o de grupo” (§37, p. 308 [Gerratana, p. 1456]), pues “la objetividad es un devenir” siempre dependiente del hombre (§17, p. 277 [Gerratana, p. 1416]).⁹ Y agrega, retomando explícitamente a Engels, que “objetivo significa siempre ‘humanamente objetivo’, lo que puede corresponder exactamente a ‘históricamente subjetivo’, o sea que objetivo significaría ‘universal subjetivo’” (§16, p. 276 [Gerratana, pp. 1415-6]).¹⁰ Como había planteado en el Cuaderno 4, “buscar la realidad fuera del hombre resulta, pues, una paradoja, así como para la religión es una paradoja [pecado] buscarla fuera de Dios (CC4 §41: Tomo 2, 179 [Gerratana, p. 467]).

Gramsci sostiene que es imposible conceptualizar la objetividad por fuera del ser humano, histórica y socialmente situado, y por lo tanto objeta a Bujarin: “¿Parece que pueda existir una objetividad extrahistórica y extrahumana? ¿Pero quién juzgará sobre tal objetividad?” (§17, p. 276, [Gerratana, p. 1415]). Gramsci avanza con un planteo sumamente crítico de todo objetivismo, llegando a afirmar que la creencia en que el mundo externo es objetivamente real “es de origen religioso” (§17, p. 273 [Gerratana, p. 1412]), “se trata de un residuo del concepto de dios” (§17, p. 276 [Gerratana, p. 1415]).

... y por lo tanto el hombre ha encontrado el mundo ya listo y acabado, catalogado y definido de una vez por todas, esta creencia se ha convertido en un dato férreo del ‘sentido común’ y vive con la misma solidez aunque el sentimiento religioso se haya apagado o adormecido (§17, p. 273 [Gerratana, p. 1412]).

⁹ Por lo cual, como afirma Tagliagambe (2010, p. 102), la objetividad es una concepción del mundo, una filosofía y no puede ser un dato científico. Por su parte Prestipino (2009a, p. 593) sostiene que la única objetividad admisible según Gramsci es la inter-subjetividad, es decir, la tendencia hacia ideas compartidas por el mayor número de seres humanos y, en el límite, por todos ellos.

¹⁰ Cabe aclarar que la relación con Engels no está ausente del despliegue de la capacidad crítica de Gramsci. Así, al tiempo que rescata muchos elementos de su oposición al determinismo y al objetivismo, no deja de señalar que su lectura ha sido fuente de errores propios del marxismo vulgar. Como afirma Liguori, “está demostrado el recurso que Gramsci realiza a los escritos de Engels sobre algunas cuestiones cruciales de sus elaboraciones”, “sobre todo a la batalla antideterminística”, más allá de que también sostiene que “en el ‘origen de muchos de los desatinos contenidos en el *Ensayo* [de Bujarin] estaría el *Anti-Dühring*” (Liguori 2006, pp. 110-11).

Este falso “objetivismo”, la “llamada ‘realidad del mundo externo’” (§17, p. 273 [Gerratana, p. 1411]), tal como destaca Guiducci (1955), es criticada por Gramsci como un grave obstáculo para el desarrollo orgánico de la filosofía de la praxis. Y la respuesta de Gramsci partirá de una recuperación parcial del subjetivismo, a partir de una revalorización enfática de Hegel: “la filosofía de la praxis no puede dejar de ser relacionada con el hegelianismo, que representa la forma más completa y genial de esta concepción [la concepción subjetivista de la realidad]” (§17, p. 275 [Gerratana, p. 1413]); aunque necesita elaborarse como una nueva síntesis. En el Cuaderno 10 (apartado 10 de la segunda parte), plantea que esta síntesis evitaría “la posición recíprocamente unilateral criticada en la primera tesis sobre Feuerbach entre materialismo e idealismo” (CC10 II §10, p. 145 [Gerratana, p. 1248]). Como dice Thomas (2009, p. 362-83), la forma de avanzar en esta línea es a través de una revitalización del marxismo, en tanto filosofía de la praxis, para que logre producir una identidad entre teoría y práctica tal que desarrolle las formas teóricamente adecuadas de una práctica, capaz de incrementar su capacidad de actuar y, al mismo tiempo, de producir las formas prácticas adecuadas de una teoría capaz de incrementar su capacidad de conocimiento.

Ahora bien, esta idea tan subjetiva de “objetividad”, en el sentido de depender de las construcciones subjetivas, sociales, no implica que lo que se considera como “objetivo” pierda efectividad en tanto guía de la conducta. Es que para los hombres y mujeres constituyen referencias que describen “objetivamente” la realidad, y por lo tanto, ellos actúan en el mundo en base a estas “verdades”. El ejemplo que despliega Gramsci al respecto es el de las referencias de “Oriente” y “Occidente”. Claramente las conceptualiza como “construcciones arbitrarias, convencionales, o sea históricas”. Pero aclara que

...han cristalizado no desde el punto de vista de un hipotético y melancólico hombre en general, sino desde el punto de vista de las clases cultas europeas que a través de su hegemonía mundial los han hecho aceptar dondequiera (§20, p. 279 [Gerratana, p. 1416]).

Entonces, a través de la hegemonía, lo arbitrario se vuelve “objetivo”, es decir, que queda fuera de discusión, y los sujetos lo consideran descripciones verdaderas del mundo que, por lo tanto, resultan operativas para guiar la conducta. Y al funcionar de modo intersubjetivo tienen eficacia no solo individual, sino social, tanto en el presente como guía para la acción futura:

... estas referencias son reales, corresponden a hechos reales, permiten viajar [...] y llegar exactamente [...] permiten ‘prever’ el futuro, objetivar la realidad, comprender la objetividad del mundo externo. Racional y real se identifican (§20, p. 280 [Gerratana, p. 1420]).

Gramsci retoma la identidad hegeliana entre lo real y lo racional a través de su redefinición. Como lo señala Prestipino (2009b), no a partir de la primacía de lo racional, sino de un proceso de lucha política que, en la medida en que una voluntad consciente subjetiva y colectiva, consigue realizarse. Es de este modo que lo racional deviene real. Solo la lucha, en la medida que ocurra un éxito permanente, establecerá aquello que es racional u irracional (Prestipino 2009b: 696). “Solo la lucha, con su éxito, y ni siquiera con su éxito inmediato, sino con el que se manifiesta en una victoria permanente, dirá qué es lo racional o irracional, qué es ‘digno’ de vencer, porque, a su modo, continúa y supera el pasado” (CC6, §10: Tomo 3, p. 17 [Gerratana, p. 690]).

4. *La objetividad y la cuestión de las “leyes” sociales*

En el contexto de estas reflexiones, Gramsci redefine el concepto de “leyes sociales”. Solo en la medida en que la naturalización sea indiscutida, en grado tal que las acciones prevean que todos adaptarán sus conductas a determinadas objetivizaciones de cómo funciona y debe funcionar el mundo social, es que tendrán eficacia determinadas “leyes” acotadas a estos escenarios:

Existe necesidad cuando existe una *premisa* eficiente y activa, cuyo conocimiento en los hombres se ha vuelto actuante planteando fines concretos a la conciencia colectiva, y constituyendo un conjunto de convicciones y de creencias

poterosamente actuante como las ‘creencias populares’ [...] que tengan la fuerza de inducir a la acción ‘a toda costa’ (§52, p. 327 [Gerratana, p. 1479-80]).

Pero el analista crítico no puede aceptarlas como leyes naturales, sino que tiene que considerarlas como construcciones humanas de carácter histórico y/o producto del predominio de cierta visión científico-ideológica. Es que para Gramsci, si bien todas las ciencias trabajan en base al concepto de “regularidad”, cada tipo de ciencia posee diferente tipo de regularidad (Boothman 2009: 746). Más particularmente, la filosofía de la praxis no puede caer presa de este objetivismo que nace de la práctica cotidiana, y del científicismo que naturaliza las regularidades que surgen de este objetivismo. Cuestión que se ejemplifica con las leyes “económicas”:

... de la formación de un mercado mundial se pued[en] aislar y estudiar las leyes de regularidad necesarias, o sea las leyes de tendencia, que son leyes no en sentido naturalista o del determinismo especulativo, sino en sentido ‘historicista’, o sea en cuanto que en ellas se verifica el ‘mercado determinado’ o sea un ambiente orgánicamente vivo y vinculado en sus momentos de desarrollo... (CC10 (II) §9, tomo 4, p. 145 [Gerratana, pp. 1247-8]).

Se puede observar cómo Gramsci vincula los conceptos de “leyes de tendencia” y de “mercado determinado”. Es que critica la hipostación de una dinámica “automática” del mercado por parte de los economistas burgueses (incluso cuando signifique un avance en el conocimiento científico de la realidad social), mientras que el marxismo debía efectuar siempre su análisis crítico:

La ‘crítica’ de la economía política parte del concepto de la historicidad del ‘mercado determinado’ y de su ‘automatismo’, mientras que los economistas puros conciben estos elementos como ‘eternos’, ‘naturales.’” (§52, p. 325 [Gerratana, p. 1478]).

Como dice Frosini, el concepto de determinación, en el concepto de “mercado determinado”, significa para Gramsci el “*real* condicionamiento, que la estructura fundamental de la sociedad ejerce sobre la forma del mercado”, pues “la intervención estatal *es* el

mercado determinado”, es decir, “la forma a través del cual la sociedad es organizada, de modo que la subordinación de una clase (la depreciación preliminar de la mercancía ‘trabajo’) es colocada en la base de la ‘regularidad’” (Frosini 2009d, pp. 531-2). En palabras de Gramsci,

...la intervención estatal no solo se produce en la forma mencionada por Einaudi, o en la forma deseada por Spirito, sino que es una condición preliminar de toda actividad económica colectiva, es un elemento del mercado determinado, si no es además el mismo mercado determinado, porque es la misma expresión político-jurídica del hecho por el que una determinada mercancía (el trabajo) es preliminarmente depreciada, es puesta en condiciones de inferioridad competitiva, paga por todo el sistema determinado (CC10 (II) §20: tomo 4, p. 153 [Gerratana, p. 1258]).

Como desarrolla Frosini en un texto posterior, es la relación de fuerza la que produce el efecto de objetividad del fenómeno económico; el cual, solo en este sentido, se presenta parangonable a las leyes naturales. La necesidad es siempre circunstancial, aunque al mismo tiempo eficaz. Es que el concepto de “necesidad” y con él el de “ley” son redefinidos por Gramsci en relación con la práctica, de modo que no tendrá sentido separar estructura de superestructura, en cuanto la misma determinación vigente en la primera es “efecto” de la unidad concreta de la primera con la segunda (Frosini 2010, pp. 140 y 188). Así, el concepto de determinación pensado como regularidad práctica sintetiza, entonces, conocimiento y voluntad, verdad e ideología (Frosini 2010, p. 147). Por lo cual el postulado gramsciano de una “inmanencia del pensamiento” debe ser conceptualizado en términos de una “terrenalidad absoluta”. Es que Gramsci “distingue la inmanencia como categoría (el inmanentismo, posición interna al discurso de la metafísica), de la inmanencia como posición concreta de pensamiento, como ‘experiencia’”. Y esta reflexión la basa en su interpretación/traducción de la segunda tesis sobre Feuerbach (Frosini 2009b, pp. 49-50).

La verdad tendría un carácter práctico, mundano, profano, es decir, “inmanente”, que se vincula con una concepción de la unidad entre teoría y práctica que no es pensada a partir de la teoría, sino como una

cuestión de la práctica misma (Frosini 2010, p. 39). Para Frosini, el trabajo esencial de Gramsci en los *Cuadernos* es el proyecto de una nueva aproximación a Marx que permita destacar la que para él fue su principal aporte: “la redefinición del concepto de ‘verdad’ en términos de ‘praxis’” (Frosini 2009b, p. 22). Como plantea Vacca, para Gramsci, el paradigma gnoseológico del marxismo es la teoría de la “abstracción determinada” (Vacca 2017, p. 167).

Además, tal como destaca Cospito (2016, p. 84), el error del concepto de “ley social” es que prescinde de la voluntad de los hombres. Así, en el Cuaderno 15, Gramsci señala que “puesto que no se puede prescindir de la voluntad y de la iniciativa de los hombres mismos, este concepto [leyes] no puede dejar de ser falso” (CC15 §10, tomo 5, p. 186 [Gerratana, pp. 1765-6]).

Entonces, las “verdades”, las “necesidades” y la propia validación pragmática resultan todos conceptos ideológicos con efectividad hegemónica. De modo que, “no existe una ‘realidad’ válida por sí misma, en sí y por sí, sino en relación histórica con los hombres que la modifican” (§59, p. 332 [Gerratana, p. 1486]). Por lo tanto, “objetivo” no tiene más valor que el que surge de la capacidad de algunos sectores de imponer su perspectiva, como la única forma de ver/describir una cuestión. Las ideas de objetividad, verdad, universalidad y hegemonía quedan así fuertemente entrelazadas en la visión gramsciana.

Un ejemplo tal vez sirva para clarificar esta cuestión. Habitualmente, las “leyes” de la economía capitalista funcionan “normalmente” y envían a la quiebra a las empresas menos eficientes; esto se impone como una realidad “objetiva”, les guste o no a cada capitalista individual. Sin embargo, ante una crisis generalizada, los Estados suspenden el efecto de estas “leyes”, vuelcan numerosos recursos fiscales en auxilio de las empresas en graves dificultades y evitan las quiebras masivas. La relación de fuerzas redetermina cuáles son las “leyes” que funcionan y cuáles ya no, redefiniendo qué se impone como “objetivo” a los actores económicos.

5. Crítica al materialismo

Gramsci analiza que esta ilusión de objetividad se logra reproducir dentro del marxismo a partir de la asimilación de una mirada epistemológica que contiene una equivocada distinción cualitativa entre lo material y lo espiritual. Una distinción que devalúa la importancia de lo espiritual, hasta considerarlo como una mera “apariencia”, mientras que sobrevalúa lo material como lo único real. En este sentido, Gramsci critica a un “materialismo metafísico” que sostiene que “los hechos espirituales con una simple apariencia, *irreal, ilusoria* de los hechos corporales (§50, p. 323 [Gerratana, p. 1475]).¹¹

Gramsci critica al materialismo presente dentro de ciertas tradiciones marxistas a partir de señalar que no es consecuente, pues luego no aplica esta idea al propio marxismo, es decir no postula la idea de “apariencia” de las superestructuras como algo “universal”. Y es por esta misma inconsecuencia que los marxistas dogmáticos dejan de lado esta idea cuando llegan al control de las superestructuras:

Que la afirmación de la ‘apariencia’ de las superestructuras no es un acto filosófico, de conocimiento, sino sólo un acto práctico, de polémica política, se desprende del hecho de que no es postulada como ‘universal’, sino solo para determinadas superestructuras (§50, p. 323 [Gerratana, p. 1475]).

De modo que “este juicio de ‘apariencia’ es un seudopesimismo que desaparece de golpe cuando se ha ‘conquistado’ el Estado y las superestructuras” (§50, p. 324 [Gerratana, p. 1476]).

¹¹ Resulta sumamente interesante analizar la cuestión de las “apariencias” en el análisis de la coyuntura concreta efectuado por Marx en *El 18 Brumario de Luis Bonaparte*. Al respecto, Boito plantea que la relación entre apariencia y esencia no es pensada en Marx como una relación simple entre mentira y verdad. La apariencia es parte de la realidad, tiene su espesura propia (Boito 2002, p. 133). Más allá de que, en líneas generales, acordamos con el análisis de Boito, consideramos que la cuestión de la “apariencia” merece una comprensión más detenida. Podemos decir, siguiendo a Marcuse que “aquello que aparece no es mera apariencia, sino la expresión de una esencia que *existe* solo como *apariencia*” (Marcuse 1999, p. 112). El propio *18 Brumario* muestra la eficacia del plano de la política y en el mismo las representaciones subjetivas inciden fuertemente sobre su resultado, lo que luego, impacta sobre las fortalezas o debilidades de las clases y sus intereses económicos. Un análisis sistemático de estas cuestiones, en relación con *El 18 Brumario*, se encuentra en Balsa (2014).

Gramsci rescata otra visión del marxismo que “se concibe a sí misma historicistamente, esto es como una fase transitoria del pensamiento filosófico”. Es más, señala que este es un valor específico de la filosofía de la praxis, ya que “solo la filosofía de la praxis hizo dar un paso adelante al pensamiento, sobre la base de la filosofía clásica alemana, evitando toda tendencia al solipsismo, historizando el pensamiento...” (§59, pp. 331-2 [Gerratana, p. 1486]).¹²

Y, para Gramsci, hay que sacar todas las consecuencias de este razonamiento, que conduce a relativizar las “verdades” del marxismo y a ser permanentemente auto-reflexivo, crítico: “...la afirmación de la historicidad y caducidad de todas las ideologías por parte de la filosofía de la praxis, porque las ideologías son expresiones de la estructura y se modifican con el modificante de ésta” y critica que esta cuestión, “no haya sido nunca afirmado y desarrollado convenientemente (§17, p. 274 [Gerratana, p. 1413]).

Sin embargo, como decíamos, debe buscarse una “nueva síntesis” y, para ello, habría que conducir una “lucha por la objetividad”, tal como retoma de Engels. A través de la cual, se podría llegar en el futuro a “un proceso de unificación histórica”, en el que ocurra “la desaparición de las contradicciones internas”, “que son la condición de la formación de grupos y del nacimiento de las ideologías no universales concretas” (§17, pp. 276-7 [Gerratana, p. 1416]).

6. La ciencia frente al sentido común

En esta “lucha por la objetividad” hay en Gramsci, a la vez que una crítica a la ilusión del objetivismo, una revalorización de la ciencia como arma crítica frente al sentido común. Es que la crítica al objetivismo, no implica la recaída en un subjetivismo anti-científico. Gramsci sostiene que “... el afianzamiento del método experimental...

¹² Thomas (2010, pp. 17-18) diferencia las dos interpretaciones que desarrollan Gramsci y Althusser acerca de la sentencia de Engels acerca de esta herencia, por parte del proletariado alemán, de la filosofía clásica alemana. Mientras Althusser la piensa más en términos de continuidades, Gramsci subraya la idea de reemplazo por un nuevo tipo de prácticas.

inicia el proceso de disolución de la teología y la metafísica...” (§34, p. 302 [Gerratana, p. 1449]).

La clave es mantener una actitud crítica al “sentido común” en tanto pensamiento acrítico. Como señala Thomas (2010, p. 16), a lo largo de la escritura de los Cuadernos, el sentido común fue asumiendo progresivamente un papel cada vez más central entre los conceptos gramscianos. En el sentido común predominan los elementos “realistas” materialistas, o sea el producto inmediato de la sensación tosca. A la vez, el sentido común se caracteriza por “ser una concepción (incluso en los cerebros individuales) disgregada, incoherente, inconsecuente.” Por eso, “cuando en la historia se elabora un grupo social homogéneo, se elabora también, en contra el sentido común, una filosofía homogénea, o sea coherente y sistemática.” (§13, p. 261 [Gerratana, p. 1396]).

Cospito (2016, p. 246)) destaca que en el Cuaderno 11 se confirma un giro en el que el “buen sentido” se contrapone en modo explícito al “sentido común”, más allá de que en algunas notas de este mismo cuaderno Gramsci continúe transcribiendo frases de cuadernos anteriores con acepciones contradictorias.

Para Gramsci, la crítica del sentido común que tiene que realizar el marxismo debe partir, justamente, de las “verdades” establecidas en el propio sentido común. Es que solo de este modo será posible modificar la realidad “objetiva” compartida acríticamente por todos los sujetos. De otro modo, la filosofía de la praxis se convertiría en una mera actividad académica:¹³

La filosofía de la praxis no puede ser concebida más que en forma polémica, de perpetua lucha [contra otras filosofías]. Sin embargo, el punto de partida debe ser siempre el sentido común, que espontáneamente es la filosofía de las multitudes que se trata de hacer homogéneas ideológicamente (§13, p. 262 [Gerratana, pp. 1397-8]).

Pero los éxitos en la modificación del sentido común, más allá de su importancia política, no debe interpretarse como garantes del acceso a

¹³ Hay en Gramsci una crítica a la posible conversión del marxismo en una línea de pensamiento más, inserta en la academia filosófica. Esta será, justamente, la trayectoria que luego seguiría lo que Anderson criticaría como un defecto del “marxismo occidental” (Anderson, 1979).

la verdad. Es decir, que algo se considere ahora como una “verdad objetiva”, no implica que lo sea, más allá de que esto posea fuerza pragmática pues “referirse al sentido común como confirmación de verdad es una insensatez”. Simplemente, “el haber logrado hacer penetrar en él una verdad nueva es prueba de que tal verdad posee una notable fuerza de expansión y de evidencia” (§13, p. 264 [Gerratana, p. 1400]).

La transformación progresiva (hacia una mayor objetividad) del sentido común, empujada por la ciencia y el pensamiento crítico, estaría facilitada por la existencia de un componente de “buen sentido” dentro del propio sentido común pero que, a su vez, “se contrapone” al mismo (§12, p. 247 [Gerratana, p. 1378]). Es “el núcleo sano del sentido común, lo que precisamente podría llamarse buen sentido y que merece ser desarrollado y hacérsele unitario y coherente” (§12, p. 249 [Gerratana, p. 1380]). Este “buen sentido” se vincula a la práctica y, por lo tanto, genera críticas al “sentido común”, críticas que emanan de la propia práctica.

Nun afirma que, para Gramsci,

la misma experiencia concreta de los sectores populares genera un *núcleo de buen sentido* en el marco de su sentido común, por más que éste tienda a ‘embalsamar, momificar y degenerar’ las reacciones sanas que aquel promueve; porque en todo caso – y contra cualquier lectura reproduccionista – la concepción del mundo de las clases dominantes “limita el pensamiento de las masas populares negativamente, sin influirlo de modo positivo” (Nun 1989, p. 76).

Este “buen sentido” es un duro obstáculo para la integración hegemónica, pues produce un “sentido de separación” frente a la clase dominante (Nun 1989, *loc. cit.*).

Gramsci plantea que la articulación de este núcleo de “buen sentido” con la filosofía de la praxis se facilita ya que contiene un “sentido de ‘distinción’, de ‘desapego’, de independencia apenas instintivo” (§12, p. 253 [Gerratana p. 1385]), y una actitud crítica: “a diferencia de la religión y el sentido común, la filosofía es crítica, y en ese sentido coincide con el “buen sentido” que se contrapone al sentido común (§12, p. 247 [Gerratana p. 1378]). Según Nun,

el ‘sentido de separación’ denota tanto la percepción de una comunidad de intereses no necesariamente antagonista (caso de la conciencia ‘económico-corporativa’) como que ‘el pueblo *siente* que tiene enemigos y los individualiza sólo empíricamente en los así llamados señores...” (Nun 1989, p. 77).

Para Nun, la lucha político-ideológica debe reconocer la especificidad del campo del sentido común, y traducirse para poder combatir en este terreno. Y, como él lo analiza, el reconocimiento de la importancia del sentido común como terreno clave de la disputa hegemónica es hoy en día más importante aún que en la época de Marx y de Gramsci. La apuesta de ambos era que el sentido común iba a ser (o podía llegar a ser) transformado a partir del estudio científico de la dinámica social que aportaría el materialismo histórico. Especialmente en tiempos del primero, todavía era posible sostener con bases relativamente sólidas el proyecto iluminista de una transformación científico-ideológica del sentido común, con una base letrada. Incluso Gramsci mantenía (más allá de su pesimismo) un gran optimismo en la posibilidad de que el materialismo histórico pudiera transformar el sentido común, cerrar la brecha entre doxa y episteme. Sin embargo, al momento de escribir Nun su texto, encuentra que “el ‘nuevo espíritu científico’ ya no dialoga con el sentido común [...] el desarrollo científico no ha implicado un acercamiento sino un hiato creciente entre ésta y otras esferas de la práctica social” (Nun 1989, pp. 44-45). Desmintiendo las esperanzas de Marx, “los progresos de la educación y las comunicaciones no han conducido a una singularización cada vez más lúcida del ser de clase en la experiencia cotidiana de los sectores populares” (Nun 1989, p. 45).

Gramsci ya vislumbra este impacto de los medios masivos de comunicación. Así sostenía que

... hoy la comunicación hablada es un medio de difusión ideológica que tiene una rapidez, un área de acción y una simultaneidad emotiva enormemente más vasta que la comunicación escrita (el teatro, el cinematógrafo y la radio, con la difusión de altoparlantes en las plazas, baten todas las formas de comunicación escrita, desde el libro hasta la revista, el periódico, el periódico mural) pero en superficie, no en profundidad” (CC16 §21): tomo 5, p. 289 [Gerratana p. 1891]).

Regresando al *Cuaderno 11*, allí se sostiene que la tensión entre práctica y sentido común, nace de la presencia de dos conciencias (o una conciencia contradictoria): “una implícita en su actuar [...] y otra superficialmente explícita o verbal que ha heredado del pasado y ha acogido sin crítica” (§12, pp. 252-3 [Gerratana p. 1385]). Es que, para Gramsci, “siempre hay un contraste entre dos concepciones del mundo, la del actuar, y la del pensar” (§12, p. 248 [Gerratana p. 1379]).

Para la filosofía de la praxis resulta central recuperar estos dos planos de la crítica, la que surge de la filosofía, y la que nace de la práctica cotidiana. Y, entonces Gramsci postula un programa de acción:

Se trata por lo tanto de elaborar una filosofía que teniendo ya una difusión, o difusividad, por estar conectada con la vida práctica e implícita en ella [buen sentido], se convierta en un renovado sentido común con la coherencia y el nervio de las filosofías individuales: esto no puede suceder si no se sigue sintiendo siempre la exigencia del contacto cultural con los “simples” (§12, p. 251 [Gerratana pp. 1382-3]).

...la filosofía debe convertirse en política para verificarse, para seguir siendo filosofía, que la ‘tranquila teoría’ debe ser ‘ejecutada prácticamente’, debe hacerse ‘realidad efectiva’ (§49, p. 321 [Gerratana p. 1472]).

Esto debe ser así, para Gramsci, ya que “el pensamiento” debe ser asumido “como concepción del mundo, como ‘buen sentido’ difundido en el gran número” y “difundido en tal modo que se convierta en norma activa de conducta” (§59, p. 331-2 [Gerratana p. 1486]). Pero esta no es una descripción de lo que ocurre, sino un programa de acción, pues se requiere de un proceso de elaboración de este nuevo “buen sentido”. Como aclara más adelante, ha sido “necesario que la ciencia matase a un determinado buen sentido tradicional, para crear un ‘nuevo’ buen sentido” (§13, p. 264 [Gerratana p. 1400]). Es que el proceso de unidad entre teoría y práctica no es algo que ocurra de forma automática, sino que requiere de un trabajo ideológico.

Al respecto, Gramsci denuncia una visión mecanicista que soslaya necesidad de trabajo teórico en el proceso revolucionario: “en los más recientes desarrollos de la filosofía de la praxis [...] quedan aún residuos de mecanicismo, porque se habla de la teoría como ‘complemento’,

‘accesorio’ de la práctica, de teoría como sierva de la práctica” (§12, p. 253 [Gerratana p. 1386]).

Es que solo la teoría puede operar unificando lo diverso. Es decir que, para Gramsci, el elemento activo, el que logra fusionar y unificar lo diverso, es la ideología o, en su versión más sistemáticamente elaborada, la teoría. Como no hay elevación automática, toma de conciencia solo guiada por la práctica, el papel de la teoría en la unificación de los sujetos es clave. Lo que luego va a destacar Laclau, pero que en realidad ya estaba en Gramsci: “el problema fundamental de toda concepción del mundo, de toda ideología”, es “conservar la unidad ideológica en todo el bloque social que precisamente esa determinada ideología fusiona y unifica” (§12, p. 249 [Gerratana p. 1380]).¹⁴

7. *La necesidad de intelectuales de tipo nuevo*

Para llevar adelante este proceso de unificación ideológica, de base científica y de “buen sentido”, el papel de los intelectuales críticos resulta ineludible:

... la innovación no puede llegar a ser de masas en sus primeras etapas, sino por mediación de una élite en la que la concepción implícita en la humana actividad se haya convertido ya en cierta medida en conciencia actual coherente y sistemática y voluntad precisa y decidida (§12, p. 254 [Gerratana p. 1387]).

Por eso la

...autoconsciencia crítica significa histórica y políticamente creación de una elite de intelectuales: una masa humana no se ‘distingue’ y no se vuelve independiente ‘por sí misma’ sin organizarse (en sentido lato) y no hay organización sin intelectuales, o sea sin organizadores y dirigentes, o sea sin que el aspecto teórico

¹⁴ Parece evidente que cuando Laclau y Mouffe afirmaron la centralidad de lo discursivo en la construcción de la unidad política, deben haber tenido presente, al menos en la forma de una memoria no consciente, estas formulaciones de Gramsci. Lo cierto es que estos fragmentos de los *Cuadernos*, contradicen las críticas que ellos le formulan a Gramsci de la presencia de “obstáculos epistemológicos” para comprender lo no suturado, o “esencialismos” (Laclau y Mouffe 1987, pp. 216-7).

del nexo teoría-práctica se distinga concretamente en un estrato de personas ‘especializadas’ en la elaboración conceptual y filosófica (§12, p. 253 [Gerratana p. 1386]).

Ahora bien, el tipo de intelectual que cumpliría estas funciones revolucionarias tendría que tener ciertas características.¹⁵ En primer lugar, el intelectual inscripto en la filosofía de la praxis debe ser un intelectual “orgánico”. Más aún, él plantea la necesidad de que estos intelectuales se asuman como parte de una fuerza política que trabaja sistemáticamente para transformar la realidad, ya que “los partidos son los elaboradores de las nuevas intelectualidades integrales y totalitarias, o sea el crisol de la unificación de teoría y práctica entendida como proceso histórico real...” (§12, p. 254 [Gerratana p. 1387]).

Como sostiene Vacca, “la forma teórica del marxismo lo distingue de cualquier otra ciencia, pues, por un lado, construye su objeto en modo distinto, y, por otro, porque lo pone en relación con un actor que no es “el filósofo individual”, ni la comunidad científica como tal, sino un *sujeto colectivo* generado por el desarrollo de determinados antagonismos y caracterizado por una determinada finalidad” (Vacca 2017, p. 169). Es que, “la posición teórica del marxismo es inseparable de los fines políticos del movimiento histórico del cual es parte. Los que se resumen en el objetivo de elevar ‘a los simples’ a ‘una concepción superior de la vida [...] para construir un bloque intelectual-moral que haga políticamente posible un progreso intelectual de masas y no sólo de escasos grupos intelectuales’” (§12, p. 252 [Gerratana p. 1385]) (Vacca 2017, p. 173).

Por eso mismo, en segundo lugar, estos intelectuales no deben caminar demasiados pasos adelante de las masas, para así lograr el desarrollo de una “autoconciencia crítica” ligada a una “dialéctica intelectuales-masa”, de modo que “cada salto hacia una nueva ‘amplitud’ y complejidad del estrato de los intelectuales está ligado a un movimiento análogo de la masa de los simples” (§12, p. 254 [Gerratana p. 1386]). Pero se debe estar alerta pues “en el proceso se repiten continuamente momentos en los que entre masa e intelectuales (o

¹⁵ Antes que nada debemos recordar que cuando Gramsci habla de “intelectual” hace referencia a un concepto mucho más amplio que el tradicionalmente vinculado con este término.

algunos de éstos, o un grupo de éstos) se forma una separación, una pérdida de contacto” (*loc. cit.*). Por eso, lo que “realmente modifica el ‘panorama ideológico’ de una época” es la creación de “élites de intelectuales de un tipo nuevo que surjan directamente de la masa aunque permaneciendo en contacto con ella” (§12, p. 258 [Gerratana p. 1392]). Y, en este sentido, elogia la permanente preocupación de la iglesia por “impedir que ‘oficialmente’ se formen dos religiones, la de los “intelectuales” y la de las “almas simples”.” (§12, p. 249 [Gerratana p. 1381]). En cambio, señala la debilidad de las filosofías inmanentistas que no han podido crear unidad ideológica entre los “simples” y los intelectuales (§12, p. 250 [Gerratana p. 1381]).

En su crítica al intelectualismo, Gramsci sostiene que solo en este contacto con las masas, “una filosofía se vuelve ‘histórica’, se depura de los elementos intelectualistas de naturaleza individual y se hace ‘vida’” (§12, p. 250 [Gerratana p. 1382]). Y para esto es fundamental que los intelectuales compartan los sentimientos populares:

El elemento popular ‘siente’, pero no siempre comprende o sabe; el elemento intelectual ‘sabe’, pero no siempre comprende y especialmente ‘siente’. Por lo tanto, los dos extremos son la pedantería y el filisteísmo por una parte y la pasión ciega y el sectarismo por la otra [...] El error del intelectual consiste <en creer> que se pueda *saber* sin comprender y especialmente sin sentir y ser apasionado (no solo del saber en sí, sino por el objeto del saber) o sea que el intelectual puede ser tal (y no un puro pedante) si es distinto y separado del pueblo-nación, o sea sin sentir las pasiones elementales del pueblo, comprendiéndolas y en consecuencia explicándolas y justificándolas en esa situación histórica determinada, y vinculándolas dialécticamente a las leyes de la historia, a una concepción superior del mundo, científica y coherentemente elaborada, el ‘saber’; no se hace política-historia sin esta pasión, o sea sin esta conexión sentimental entre intelectuales y pueblo-nación (§67, pp. 346-7 [Gerratana p. 1505]).

Y solo en tal situación de comunión es que se puede construir una representación genuina:

Si la relación entre los intelectuales y el pueblo-nación, entre dirigentes y dirigidos, entre gobernantes y gobernados, es dada por una adhesión orgánica en la que el sentimiento-pasión se convierte en comprensión y por lo tanto en saber (no mecánicamente, sino en forma viva), sólo entonces la relación es de representación, y se produce el intercambio de elementos individuales entre

gobernados y gobernantes, entre dirigidos y dirigentes, o sea que se realiza la vida de conjunto que es la única fuerza social, se crea el 'bloque histórico' (§67, pp. 346-7 [Gerratana p. 1505-6]).

8. Una estrategia de difusión

Consecuente con su preocupación porque la filosofía de la praxis se vuelva histórica, Gramsci propone que su programa incluya el estudio y la teorización de las formas de difusión de la misma entre las masas, pues "crear una nueva cultura no implica solo hacer descubrimientos originales, sino también y especialmente difundir críticamente, socializar las verdades" (§12, p. 247 [Gerratana p. 1377]). En el marco de esta preocupación, Gramsci realiza algunas afirmaciones aisladas, pero que pueden resultar de interés. Por ejemplo, señala que, para que los movimientos culturales logren sustituir el sentido común y las viejas concepciones del mundo, hay que repetir los argumentos, variando literariamente su forma (§12, p. 258 [Gerratana p. 1392]).

Pero, más allá de esta y otras recomendaciones (ver al respecto, especialmente, el Cuaderno 24), Gramsci sostiene que hay que investigar cómo opera la construcción del sentido común y cuáles son los mecanismos que se activan para que la gente común, los "simples", mantengan sus creencias incluso cuando puedan percibir que las mismas son refutadas por algunos intelectuales. Él encuentra que estas creencias resultan relativamente inmunes a la crítica racional (excepto cuando ya están en crisis¹⁶), pues pesa más la fe, la convicción de que los que lo rodean no pueden estar equivocados. Es por eso que sostiene que, aunque cualquiera puede enredar a "un simple" con sus argumentos, sin embargo éste no cambia de forma de pensar. Una forma de pensar cuyo origen puede haber olvidado por completo:

...y él recuerda en efecto haber oído exponer difusamente, coherentemente, de manera que él quedó convencido, las razones de su fe. No recuerda las razones en concreto y no sabría repetirlas, pero sabe que existen porque las ha oído exponer y

¹⁶ De allí que las crisis realmente orgánicas no son sino resultado de cambios más profundos en las concepciones del mundo de las mayorías populares. Por eso, como subraya Frosini, "no es la 'crisis' la que hace posible la unificación de las clases subalternas, sino por el contrario, es esta misma unificación (cuando tiene lugar) la que abre una 'crisis'..." (Frosini 2010, pp. 195-6).

ha quedado convencido. El haber sido convencido una vez en forma fulgurante es la razón permanente de la permanencia de la convicción, aun cuando ya no se sepa cómo argumentar ésta (§12, p. 257 [Gerratana p. 1391]).

Todo esto conduce a Gramsci a cierto pesimismo en la consistencia de las “convicciones nuevas de las masas populares”:

Pero estas consideraciones conducen a la conclusión de una extrema fragilidad en las convicciones nuevas de las masas populares, especialmente si estas nuevas convicciones están en contraste con las convicciones (incluso nuevas) ortodoxas, socialmente conformistas según los intereses generales de las clases dominantes (§12, p. 258 [Gerratana p. 1391]).

Es probable que aquí se estuviera, justamente, refiriendo a la poca solidez ideológica de la penetración del marxismo entre las masas europeas. Un fenómeno que en esos mismos años, a partir de los conceptos de “carácter social” y de “personalidad”, observaban los miembros de la Escuela de Frankfurt, de modo de explicar el avance del nazismo entre obreros y empleados alemanes, donde existía una masiva adhesión electoral de los mismos a los partidos de izquierda (Fromm 2012).¹⁷

9. Contra el teleologismo, todos autodirigentes

La crítica al “materialismo vulgar” y a su visión fatalista, es articulada por Gramsci con su propuesta de que todos deberíamos poder ser dirigentes, autodirigentes. Gramsci afirma que “todos los hombres son ‘filósofos’”, pues la filosofía está contenida en el lenguaje (que posee una determinada concepción del mundo), en el sentido común y el buen sentido, en la religión y creencias populares (folklore) (§12, p. 245 [Gerratana p. 1375]). A partir de este reconocimiento, Gramsci propone promover el abandono de una actitud acrítica: “pensar” sin tener conciencia crítica, “participar” en una concepción del mundo

¹⁷ Una investigación cuyos resultados Fromm nunca quiso publicar. En una línea relativamente similar, Adorno, ya distanciado de Fromm, abordó el análisis de la personalidad autoritaria en la sociedad norteamericana de mediados de los años cuarenta (Adorno et. al, 1965).

impuesta por el ambiente externo, [en el proceso de socialización primaria...] si no hay una elaboración crítica, se pertenece a una “multiplicidad de hombres-masa”.

Como ha señalado Frosini (2009c, p. 878), si bien, en los primeros cuadernos hay una fuerte reivindicación al “hombre-colectivo” (enfrentado al “hombre-masa”, pero también al “hombre-individuo”), en el Cuaderno 9, apartado 23 (mayo de 1932), se plantea que “hay que ver cuánto hay de justo en la tendencia contra el individualismo y cuánto de erróneo y peligroso”, y aclara que “la lucha contra el individualismo es contra un determinado individualismo [...] contra el económico” (25 [Gerratana p. 1111]).¹⁸ En este sentido, la propuesta de Gramsci es que elaboren “la propia concepción del mundo consciente y críticamente, ser guía de sí mismos. No ya aceptar pasivamente y supinamente desde el exterior el sello de la propia personalidad” (§12, pp. 245-6 [Gerratana p. 1376]).

Vemos así que Gramsci destaca muy fuertemente la necesidad de que cada ciudadano desarrolle sus capacidades críticas, en un proceso de autoanálisis. “El inicio de la elaboración crítica es la conciencia de lo que es realmente, o sea un ‘conócete a ti mismo’ como producto del proceso histórico desarrollado hasta ahora que ha dejado en ti mismo una infinidad de huellas recibidas sin beneficio de inventario. Hay que hacer inicialmente ese inventario” (§12, p. 246 [Gerratana p. 1376]). Esto sería posible por la presencia de conciencias contradictorias al interior de cada uno:

La comprensión crítica de sí mismos se produce pues a través de una lucha de ‘hegemonías’ políticas, de direcciones contrastantes, primero en el campo de la ética, luego de la política, para llegar a una elaboración superior de la propia concepción de lo real (§12, p. 253 [Gerratana p. 1385]).

Por lo tanto, debemos reconocer las tensiones ideológicas que hay en nuestro interior, e identificarlas, retomando a Althusser (1970) como el producto de múltiples interpelaciones, que se suceden como capas dentro de nuestra conciencia.

¹⁸ Cospito rescata la “celebración de las virtudes del individualismo, en cuyo desarrollo hasta el máximo grado él ve[ía] un presupuesto necesario del paso al socialismo” (Rapone, citado por Cospito 2016, p. 141).

En Gramsci encontramos una fuerte revalorización de la toma de conciencia de la capacidad de incidencia sobre la realidad social, para lo cual emplea el término *catarsis*.

Se puede emplear el término de ‘catarsis’ para indicar el paso del momento meramente económico (o egoísta-pasional) al momento ético-político, o sea la elaboración superior de la estructura en superestructura en la conciencia de los hombres. Esto significa también el paso de lo ‘objetivo a lo subjetivo’ y de la “necesidad a la libertad” (C10 II §6: tomo 4, p. 142 [Gerratana p. 1244]).

Según Coutinho (1999, p. 92), toda forma de *praxis*, incluso aquella no vinculada directamente con el plano político, implica para Gramsci la potencialidad de un “momento catártico”: la potencialidad de un pasaje de la esfera de la manipulación inmediata (de la recepción pasiva del mundo) a la esfera de la totalidad (de la modificación de lo real). Sobre este tema vuelve Coutinho en un artículo dedicado específicamente al concepto de política en los *Cuadernos* (Coutinho 2003), donde agrega que la *catarsis* implica el momento de pasaje del determinismo económico a la libertad política (aunque no opera en el vacío). Y sostiene que este concepto resulta clave para entender a Gramsci no como un “politólogo”, sino como un “crítico de la política” (Coutinho 2003, p. 72).

Ahora bien, este proceso que trabaja a nivel individual, sin embargo solo puede ser emancipador en la medida en que se desarrolle en forma colectiva, inmerso en la lucha por la hegemonía. Y, ente sentido, en la medida en que se enmarque en la lucha política: “la conciencia de ser parte de una determinada fuerza hegemónica (o sea la conciencia política) es la primera fase para una ulterior y progresiva autoconciencia en la que teoría y práctica finalmente se unifican.” (§12, p. 253 [Gerratana p. 1385]). Es que Gramsci ya ha desarrollado un concepto más político de conciencia y de cultura.¹⁹

Para Gramsci, este trabajo sobre la propia subjetividad es la base para ser autodirigentes y, por lo tanto, resulta contradictorio con la difusión

¹⁹ Frosini destaca que en los escritos juveniles se observa todavía un pensamiento idealista de la cultura como conquista del propio yo, de la voluntad como espíritu y del socialismo como liberación de la creatividad y de la comunión de la voluntad. En cambio, en los *Cuadernos* la cultura está definida en términos prácticos y políticos, como organización de las relaciones de conciencia que no posee ninguna neutralidad (Frosini 2010, pp. 56-8).

de una versión simplificada, mecanicista y teleológica del marxismo, armada para el consumo de las masas. Una versión que conduce, justamente, a la pasividad política, pero también a una pasividad intelectual. Y Gramsci estaba completamente en contra de esta perspectiva. Podemos, entonces, observar que Gramsci comienza formulando una crítica al determinismo:

Se puede observar cómo el elemento determinista, fatalista, mecanicista, ha sido un ‘aroma’ ideológico inmediato en la filosofía de la praxis, una forma de religión y de excitante (pero a la manera de los estupefacientes), requerida y justificada históricamente por el carácter ‘subalterno’ de determinados estratos sociales (§12, p. 255 [Gerratana p. 1387-8]).

Pero reconoce cierta eficacia a este mecanismo del marxismo vulgar, ya que les daría a las masas ideas equivocadas pero que proveen de “esperanzas”. Así, frente a

...una serie de derrotas, el determinismo mecánico se convierte en una fuerza formidable de resistencia moral, de cohesión, de perseverancia paciente y obstinada. ‘Yo estoy derrotado momentáneamente, pero la fuerza de las cosas trabaja para mí a largo plazo, etcétera’. La voluntad real adopta la apariencia de un acto de fe, de una cierta racionalidad de la historia, de una forma empírica y primitiva de finalismo apasionado que aparece como un sustituto de la predestinación, de la providencia, etcétera, de las religiones confesionales (§12, p. 255 [Gerratana p. 1388]).

Pero esta (de)formación de las masas es un peligro, pues “cuando el ‘subalterno’ se vuelve dirigente y responsable de la actividad económica de masas, el mecanismo aparece en cierto punto como un peligro inminente” (§12, p. 255 [Gerratana p. 1388]). Por eso, para Gramsci, lo importante es que los subalternos tengan apreciaciones certeras y que sus integrantes se vayan convirtiendo en sus propios autodirigentes. De modo que, “si el subalterno era ayer una cosa, hoy no es ya una cosa sino una persona histórica, un protagonista”, “agente y necesariamente activo y emprendedor”. Por eso es que “el fatalismo no es más que un revestimiento en los débiles de una voluntad activa y real”. Por todos estos motivos, Gramsci confirma “la futilidad del determinismo mecánico”, “causa de pasividad, de imbécil

autosuficiencia”. Por eso concluye estas apreciaciones planteando que “una parte de la masa incluso subalterna es siempre dirigente y responsable y la filosofía de la parte precede siempre a la filosofía del todo, no sólo como anticipación teórica, sino como necesidad actual” (§12, p. 255 [Gerratana p. 1389]).²⁰

10. La crítica al cientificismo no conduce al inmovilismo

No quisiéramos finalizar sin considerar el problema que planteábamos al inicio, en términos del interrogante que le surge a muchos militantes revolucionarios en torno a si una relativización de las “verdades”, una crítica al objetivismo, no corre el riesgo de devaluar la templanza militante y no podría conducir a un relativismo conformista.

Gramsci no rehúye a este problema. En primer lugar, reconoce que “es muy difícil hacer comprender ‘prácticamente’ que semejante interpretación”, que toda verdad ha tenido orígenes prácticos, “es válida también para la misma filosofía de la praxis, sin hacer tambalear aquellas convicciones que son necesarias para la acción” (§62, p. 334 [Gerratana p. 1489]).²¹ Sin embargo, como señala Thomas (2009, p. 254), a pesar de registrar estas dificultades, nunca planteó la posibilidad de abandonar la obligación de aplicar los métodos de una crítica histórica-ideológica al propio marxismo.

Gramsci también destaca que esta tensión genera una tendencia en el marxismo, en tanto ideología que apunta a la acción, hacia el dogmatismo como forma equivocada para tratar de solucionar este problema:

²⁰ De todos modos, existe una forma a través de la cual Gramsci mantiene la posibilidad de cierta perspectiva teleológica. Si bien, en muchos casos la “misión histórica” “asume un significado equivoco y místico”, sería posible pensar un significado vinculado al “concepto kantiano de la teleología” que, entonces “puede ser sostenido y justificado por la filosofía de la praxis.” (§23: 285). Tal como dice Frosini, “solo asumiendo problemáticamente la nueva acepción kantiana (presente en la *Crítica del juicio* y los escritos de la filosofía de la historia), según los cuales se puede utilizar la finalidad en modo regulativo, salvaguardando así la individualidad empírica de los hechos, es posible escapar al peligro de convertir al determinismo histórico en una forma obsoleta de finalismo” (Frosini 2009a, p. 88).

²¹ De hecho, comenta que es una tensión que los católicos aprovechan para criticar todo historicismo pues para ellos “conduce necesariamente al escepticismo moral y la depravación” (§62, p. 334 [Gerratana p. 1489]).

...la filosofía de la praxis tiende a convertirse en una ideología en el peor sentido, o sea un sistema dogmático de verdades absolutas y eternas; especialmente cuando, como en el Ensayo popular [de Bujarin], éste es confundido con el materialismo vulgar, con la metafísica de la ‘materia’ que no puede ser sino eterna y absoluta (§62, p. 334-5 [Gerratana p. 1489]).

La forma que propone Gramsci para sortear este dilema es, justamente, mantener la tensión, no negarla. De modo que, hay que combinar creencia con criticismo. Como dice Gramsci, “la cuestión es sobre las dosis de ‘criticismo’ y de ‘historicismo’ que están contenidas en cada forma de pensamiento” (§45, p. 317 [Gerratana p. 1467]). Hay que convertir la filosofía en ideología, pero sin perder la capacidad crítica y autocrítica. Por eso afirma que “es cierto que toda forma de pensamiento debe considerarse a sí misma como ‘exacta’ y ‘verdadera’ y combatir a las otras formas de pensamiento; pero esto ‘críticamente’” (§45, p. 317 [Gerratana p. 1467]). Pues, “cada filósofo está y no puede dejar de estar convencido de que expresa la unidad del espíritu humano”, de otro modo “los hombres no actuarían, no crearían nueva historia, o sea que las filosofías no podrían convertirse en ‘ideologías’, no podrían asumir en la práctica la granítica solidez fanática de las ‘creencias populares’ que asumen la misma energía de las ‘fuerzas materiales’” (§62, pp. 332-3 [Gerratana p. 1487]).

Por este mismo razonamiento, toda ideología requiere, incluso, para cobrar mayor fuerza en su eficacia interpelativa, de la construcción de una utopía: “no se puede afirmar, más que genéricamente, un mundo sin contradicciones sin crear inmediatamente una utopía” (§62, p. 333 [Gerratana p. 1488]). Pero, “esto no significa que la utopía no pueda tener un valor filosófico, porque ella tiene un valor político”, y agrega que “en este sentido la religión es la más gigantesca utopía, o sea la más gigantesca ‘metafísica’”, y “el intento más grandioso de conciliar en forma mitológica las contradicciones reales de la vida histórica” (loc. cit.).

Al respecto, Frosini (2010, p. 41) rescata de la religión la fuerza de la creencia en tanto capaz de motivar a la acción a masas humanas relevantes, a través de la construcción de una subjetividad unitaria que permite a estas masas imaginarse como políticamente activas y

eficaces. De todos modos, la filosofía de la praxis no es reducible a una “religión”, porque no cae en la contradicción de autodefinirse como una ideología intrascendible, en cambio, debería ser consciente de sus propias determinaciones (Frosini 2010, p. 99), al tiempo que recuperaría la capacidad correctiva de la ciencia experimental.

Para finalizar estas reflexiones sobre la actitud que deben asumir los intelectuales orgánicos, consideramos oportuno recordar la propuesta de Semeraro: es preciso

aprender con Gramsci el difícil arte de lidiar con la diversidad sin caer en el relativismo, de luchar contra los dogmas sin dejar de buscar la verdad, de respetar la particularidad sin pulverizarse, de construir la unidad sin transformarla en uniformidad, de realizar la democracia popular contra los simulacros posmodernos (Semeraro 2015, p.149).

11. Consideraciones finales

Como en tantos otros temas, hemos hallado una perspectiva clarificadora sobre la relación ciencia y práctica política, releyendo la obra de Antonio Gramsci. Como hemos visto, la solución no la encontramos a través de la negación de las tensiones. En cambio, hay que reconocer la existencia de tensiones entre verdad y relatividad, entre ideología y ciencia, entre objetividad y subjetividad. Tratar de ignorar estas tensiones, y pregonar una versión positivista del marxismo solo nos lleva al dogmatismo y, finalmente, a la negación de la política.

Regresando al texto de Engels al que hacíamos referencia en la introducción a este artículo, la clave parece estar en evitar los “sistemas” cerrados, que niegan las contradicciones y terminan procurando “verdades absolutas”. Como lo dice en relación a Hegel, al tiempo que recupera sus principales aportes: “el ‘sistema’ es, cabalmente, lo efímero en todos los filósofos, y lo es precisamente porque brota de una necesidad imperecedera del espíritu humano: la necesidad de superar todas las contradicciones [... y llegar así a] “la llamada verdad absoluta” (Engels 1975 [1886]: 21).

Justamente, hay que saber transitar las contradicciones y valorar positivamente las tensiones entre los saberes que emanarían de la

teoría “científica” y las creencias y prácticas concretas de los sectores populares, como así también de la retroalimentación entre las elaboraciones conceptuales y las acciones políticas. En este sentido, consideramos fundamentales las apreciaciones de Álvaro García Linera (2011) en torno a las “tensiones creativas de la revolución” y creemos que su respuesta sería extrapolable al enfoque marxista sobre la relación ciencia y política. Más aún, pensamos que solo una forma partido (o frente de partidos y movimientos) que despliegue una dinámica profundamente democrática y respetuosa de la diversidad, y que apueste al poder popular, podría abrir la posibilidad de transitar estas tensiones de forma dinámica y emancipadora.

Bibliografía

Althusser, Louis 1970, *Ideología y aparatos ideológicos del Estado. Freud y Lacan*, Buenos Aires, Nueva Visión.

Althusser, Louis y E. Balibar 1985, *Para leer “El Capital”*, México, Siglo XXI.

Adorno. Theodor et al. 1965, *La personalidad autoritaria*. Buenos Aires: Editorial Proyección.

Anderson, Perry 1979, *Consideraciones sobre el marxismo occidental*, Madrid, Siglo XXI.

Balsa, Javier 2014, *Marx, lenguaje, representación y dinámica política*, «Documento de trabajo», Bernal, IESAC/UNQ.

_____ 2016, *Pensar la hegemonía y la estrategia política en Latinoamérica*, “Prácticas de Oficio” (IDES), 17.

_____ 2018, *Pensar la estrategia política a partir de los aportes de las nuevas lecturas sobre la obra de Gramsci*, “Batalla de Ideas”, 5.

Boito, Armando Jr. 2002, *Cena política e interesse de classe na sociedade capitalista - comentário em comemoração ao sesquicentenário da publicação de O Dezoito Brumário de Luis Bonaparte*, “Revista Crítica Marxista”, São Paulo, n. 15, pp. 127-39.

Boothman, Derek 2009, *Scienza*, en G. Liguori y P. Voza (ed.), *Dizionario Gramsciano, 1926-1937*, Roma, Carocci.

Buci-Glucksmann, Christine 1978, *Gramsci y el Estado*, Madrid, Siglo XXI.

Bujarin, Nicolai 1972 [1921], *Teoría del materialismo histórico. Ensayo popular de sociología marxista*, Buenos Aires, Siglo XXI.

Cospito, Giuseppe 2016, *El ritmo del pensamiento de Gramsci*, Buenos Aires, Peña Lillo.

Coutinho, Carlos Nelson 1999, *Gramsci. Um estudo sobre seu pensamento político*, Rio de Janeiro, Civilização Brasileira, 1999.

_____ 2003, *O conceito de política nos Cadernos do cárcere*, en C. N. Coutinho y de Paula Teixeira (comp), *Ler Gramsci, entender a realidade*, Rio de Janeiro, Civilização Brasileira.

Engels, Friedrich 1975 [1886], *Ludwig Feuerbach y el fin de la filosofía clásica alemana*, Buenos Aires, Anteo.

Fromm, Erich 2012 [1939], *Obreros y empleados en vísperas del Tercer Reich. Un análisis psicológico-social*, Buenos Aires, Fondo de Cultura Económica.

Frosini, Fabio 2009a, *Bucharin, Nikolaj Ivanovič*, en G. Liguori y P. Voza (ed.), *Dizionario Gramsciano, 1926-1937*, Roma, Carocci.

_____ 2009b, *Da Gramsci a Marx: Ideologia, verità e politica*, Roma, DeriveApprodi.

_____ 2009c, *Uomo*, en G. Liguori y P. Voza (ed.), *Dizionario Gramsciano, 1926-1937*, Roma, Carocci.

_____ 2009d, *Mercato determinato*, en G. Liguori y P. Voza (ed.), *Dizionario Gramsciano, 1926-1937*, Roma, Carocci.

_____ 2010, *La religione dell'uomo moderno. Politica e verità nei Quaderni del carcere di Antonio Gramsci*, Roma, Carocci.

García Linera, Álvaro 2011, *Las tensiones creativas de la revolución*, La Paz, Vicepresidencia del Estado Plurinacional.

Gramsci, Antonio 1975, *Quaderni del carcere*, Valentino Gerratana (ed.), Torino, Einaudi.

_____ 1986/1999, *Cuadernos de la Cárcel*, México, Era.

Gramsci, Antonio 2004 [1917], *La revolución contra 'El Capital'*, en *Antología*, Buenos Aires, Siglo XXI.

_____ 2015 *Scritti (1910-1926) 2, 1917*, Leonardo Rapone (ed.), *Edizione nazionale degli scritti di Antonio Gramsci*, Istituto della Enciclopedia Italiana.

Guiducci, Roberto 1955. *Gramsci e la scienza: l'oggettività come conquista storico-sociale dell'uomo*, "Questioni" [Torino], I, n. 4-5; pp. 29-45.

Laclau, E. y C. Mouffe 1987, *Hegemonía y estrategia socialista. Hacia una radicalización de la democracia*, Madrid, Siglo XXI.

Liguori, Guido 2006, *Sentieri gramsciani*, Roma, Carocci.

Marcuse, Herbert 1999, *Razón y Revolución Hegel y el surgimiento de la teoría social*, Madrid, Alianza.

Missiroli, Mario 1919, *Il socialismo contro la scienza*, "L'Ordine Nuovo", primer año, n. 10, 19/7/1919, pp. 77-8.

Morfinio, Vittorio 2016, *Althusser lettore di Gramsci*, "Décalages", Vol. 2, Issue 1.

Nun, José 1989, *La rebelión del coro. Estudios sobre la racionalidad política y el sentido común*, Buenos Aires, Nueva Visión.

Prestipino, Giuseppe 2009a, *Oggettività*, en G. Liguori y P. Voza (ed.), *Dizionario Gramsciano, 1926-1937*, Roma, Carocci.

_____ 2009b, *Reale-razionale*, en G. Liguori y P. Voza (ed.), *Dizionario Gramsciano, 1926-1937*, Roma, Carocci.

Rossi Luigi 2013, *Antonio Gramsci e la scienza come problema dell'egemonia*, «Illuminazioni», n. 23, gennaio-marzo 2013; pp. 132-67.

Semeraro, Giovanni 2015, *Gramsci e os novos embates da filosofia da práxis*, São Paulo, editoria Ideias & Letras.

Tagliagambe, Silvano 2010, *Gramsci e la scienza*, en E. Orrú y N. Rudas (ed.), *Identità e universalità: Il mondo di Antonio Gramsci*, Cagliari, Istituto Gramsci della Sardegna.

Thomas, Peter 2009, *The Gramscian Moment. Philosophy, Hegemony and Marxism*, Leiden, Brill.

Vacca, Giuseppe 2017, *Modernità alternative. Il Novecento di Antonio Gramsci*, Torino, Einaudi.

2018

Labour Movements and State Formation in Turkey: Passive Revolution and Uneven Development (in English)

Jonas Sylvest

Follow this and additional works at: <https://ro.uow.edu.au/gramsci>

Recommended Citation

Sylvest, Jonas, Labour Movements and State Formation in Turkey: Passive Revolution and Uneven Development (in English), *International Gramsci Journal*, 2(4), 2018, 37-82.

Available at: <https://ro.uow.edu.au/gramsci/vol2/iss4/5>

Labour Movements and State Formation in Turkey: Passive Revolution and Uneven Development (in English)

Abstract

This article aims to apply the theory of Antonio Gramsci to labour-state relations in Turkey. More specifically it seeks to highlight the causes of political instability and the contradictory course of labour politics, mainly in the 1950-1980 period, from a Gramscian perspective. On the basis mainly of the Gramscian studies of Adam D. Morton (2011) and the Prison Notebooks of Antonio Gramsci (Gramsci 1971, 1975, 1992, 1996, 2007), the article illustrates how class struggles indicative to the formation of the modern Turkish state, within the conditions of uneven capitalist development, resulted in a political stalemate in the 1950s, 60s and 70s. Through the application of such concepts as passive revolution, uneven and combined development and the capitalist type of state, the author seeks to clarify how labour-state relations in Turkey are intrinsically linked to modern state formation. This involves the concomitant co-optation of labour movements and establishment of market relations, rooted in an international uneven and combined capitalist system.

Keywords

Turkey; passive revolution; integral state; uneven and combined development; labour-state relations; parties and trade unions

Labour Movements and State Formation in Turkey: Passive Revolution and Uneven Development

Jonas Sylvest

1. Introduction

Few will deny that the years between 1950 and 1980 were turbulent years in Turkish labour politics – indeed in Turkish politics in general. State policies towards labour movements oscillated between the granting of rights modelled on Western liberal democracies, followed by a revoking of the same rights not long after, and outright violent repression. Moreover, most of these policy changes were, ironically, enacted in the aftermath of military coups. Many have portrayed these developments as the symptoms of a weak democratic system unable to safeguard universal rights, which such a system promises. Such an analysis promotes a perception of the state mainly as a repressive apparatus restraining the rights of the working class, whereas civil society and its organizations are a progressive force for good. It could be argued, however, especially from a labour standpoint, that another perspective on labour movements might help illuminate the repressive structures of state-labour relations in a more fruitful and nuanced manner. With such an aim in mind, this article sets out to clarify the class character of the state, and the inherent bias against labour that this brings with it, through a Gramscian analysis of Turkish state formation with a special focus on labour.

Gramsci's theory seeks to make clear the class character of the state by delineating the institutional separation of society into the two spheres of civil society and state, and, thereby, exposing the underlying structures of state power. In his *Prison Notebooks* he thus states that certain ideas are based on

a distinction between political society and civil society, which is made into and presented as an organic one, whereas in fact it is merely methodological [...] in actual reality civil society and the state are one and the same (Gramsci 1971, pp. 159-60; Q13, §18, p. 1590 of the 1975 Italian Critical Edition).

The adoption by most social scientists of a narrow definition of the concept of the state – as opposed to the comprehensive Gramscian definition – reproduces the perception of the state as something autonomous, or semi-autonomous, and therefore also extends the view that civil society actors are external to the inner workings of the state. Within the field of studies on labour, this results in the analysis taking on a decidedly pluralist view of labour unions as agents external to and in opposition to the state.¹ Additionally, some neo-Gramscian analyses simplify the complex character of the modern state and consequently end up reproducing the civil society-state division to varying extents² due to the lack of attention to the inner structures of the integral state complex. The approach to the writings of Antonio Gramsci by Adam D. Morton represents a more class and historical materialist-oriented application of Gramscian theory, and it is the contention in this article that such an approach brings forth new aspects of Marxist analyses of the Turkish state, as it provides a more rigorous and detailed application of such Gramscian concepts as hegemony, passive revolution and the integral state. Gramsci applied the concept of passive revolution, among other ways, as a “revolution

¹ Here, for instance, we are thinking of the application of the corporatist / pluralist group theory of Philippe Schmitter by Robert Bianchi in “Interest Groups and Political Development in Turkey” (Bianchi 1984). This seminal work partially focuses on state-labour relations in Turkey. The corporatist-pluralist perspective on state-labour relations attempts to elucidate how the state interferes in civil society and attempts to control pluralist actors. From a Gramscian perspective such a theory presupposes the perception of civil society as something in opposition to and separate from the state. It, thus, reproduces the civil society/state cleavage which obscures the class character of the state, and portrays labour movements as something outside the realm of the state.

² A poignant example here is Ahmet Öncü’s *Dictatorship Plus Hegemony: A Gramscian Analysis of the Turkish State* (Öncü 2003), where the state / civil society division likewise is reproduced. It should be mentioned here that state/civil society also represents the aspects of domination and hegemony respectively, so that the integral state constitutes both coercion and consent. It is the whole of society, not restricted to a coercive political sphere that is/should be isolated from the economy. For further analysis of this article and Bianchi’s book above by this article’s author, contact University of Southern Denmark for a copy of the master’s thesis *Labour Movements and State Formation in Turkey – Passive Revolution and Uneven Development*.

without mass participation” and as a “‘molecular’ social transformation” (Cf. the editorial note in Gramsci 1971, p. 46). For the purpose of overall clarification, it should be mentioned that the concept of passive revolution will be applied mainly in the latter sense to illuminate the attempt at integration of subordinate classes through a series of reforms in the twentieth century, as part of the process of capitalist-industrialist state formation in the absence of a fully-fledged hegemony.³

As indicated in the title, Turkish state formation, passive revolution and the Uneven and Combined Development (U&CD) of capitalism are here presented as three inseparable concepts when observing the historical development of class relations in Turkey. The concept of passive revolution has a dual character; on the one hand it is based on the historical specificities of capitalist state formation in Gramsci’s own time – the changing and expansive role of the state, with the growing role of civil society, modernization, industrialization, and fascist corporatism – and on the other hand a more general principle deriving from the specific historical observations of the ability of capitalism to reorganize and adapt in the face of organic crises (Morton 2011, p. 38). The former, Gramsci noted in his day, “takes place when, through a “reform” process, the economic structure is transformed from an individualistic one to a planned economy (*economia diretta*) and when the emergence of an “intermediate economy” – i.e., an economy in the space between the purely individualistic one and the one that is comprehensively planned – enables the transition to more advanced political and cultural forms without the kind of radical and destructive cataclysms that are utterly devastating. “Corporativism” could be – or, as it grows, could become – this form of intermediate economy that has a “passive” character.” (Gramsci 2007, p. 378, Q8§236). As we shall see, this description of an intermediate economy fits well for Republican Turkey, both before and after the turn to a multiparty parliamentary system in the 1950s.

³ Besides this main focus on the 20th century, the article will also briefly serve to highlight the role of the Young Turk Revolution as a passive revolution in pre-industrial capitalist Ottoman Turkey, which is an example of the first type of passive revolution, as a more Caesarist type of passive revolution involving regime change. It is beyond the scope of the article to focus on passive revolution expressed as the attempt by subordinate classes to alter things in their favour.

Passive revolution, in other words, involves both the production and the reproduction of capitalism through a rugged, and at times violent, process of revolution and restoration. In Turkey this process has taken the form of a stunted and delayed development of a bourgeois class, and the attendant attempt by state élites to nurture capitalist development in the face of foreign competition. Political developments in the multiparty era suffered from such developments, as a weak and divided bourgeoisie was unable to establish a hegemonic structure based on market conditions and the predominance of consent. Despite this lack of leadership, the ideological elements that were consolidated during the last years of the Ottoman Empire and the succeeding single-party rule proved very salient among the working classes, and helped partially integrate labour movements into the integral State system of the new Turkish State. This modern state, which is formed from this process of passive revolution, is unique as compared to the pre-capitalist state in that it takes on a specific shape, ultimately resulting from the non-political character of surplus extraction owing to the market mechanisms on which the state is based. The modern state is, thus, based upon the premise of the separation of the economic and political aspect of society, which in turn leads to the reification (Morton 2011, p. 7) of the state as something autonomous and separate from civil society. This reification leads to Weberian theoretical assumptions about the State, confining its role to that of a coercive apparatus. On the other hand, Gramsci's perception of the state as "integral", as a social and relational structure, is an attempt to lay bare its fundamental class character, which is obscured by the above-mentioned separation that endows the State with a perception of universality and impartiality (Morton 2011, p. 20). The relational state is according to Morton "a strategic field in which the relations of production are bound up with political and ideological relations that consecrate and legitimize them" (Morton 2011, p. 7). Thus, the Gramscian state, as opposed to the Weberian one, is defined by both consent (civil society) and coercion (state), because of the mutual contractual exchange inherent to the capitalist mode of production (Morton 2011, p. 72). As the internal logic of the integral state is bound up on market mechanisms, Morton applies the concepts of *a*

state in capitalist society and *the capitalist type of state*, which were originally developed by Bob Jessop, to denote the extent to which the state complex is dominated by market mechanisms. The former describes the not yet fully developed capitalist state, where pre-capitalist accumulation is the prevalent mode of production, and therefore surplus extraction is politicized. In this state, the coercive aspect of state actors is dominant, which means that the exercise of power “is more transparently articulated” and therefore the class character of the state is more obvious. This state retains a functional adequacy signified in the ability of the state to reproduce the “requirements of the capital relation” (*ibid*), that is, if you will, the more practical and economic aspect of capital accumulation, whereas, in *a capitalist type of state*, society is dominated by the logic of accumulation, in such a manner that disguises the exploitative role of the owners of the means of production. This state retains formal adequacy that represents the institutional separation of the state and civil society, which is typical for liberal democracy. Bob Jessop notes that “This separation is both real and illusory” (in Wetherly, Barrow, and Burnham (eds) 2008, p. 146), as the modern capitalist state does in fact separate into these two spheres, but it is an illusory separation because it only functions to conceal the fact that the real power is vested in the owners of the means of production. As mentioned earlier by Gramsci, the distinction is “merely methodological” (Gramsci 1971, pp. 159-60; Q13, §18, p. 1, p. 1590).

Although the “goal” is to create conditions that nurture the basis for the deepening of capital accumulation, while disguising or mystifying the capitalist nature of the state, this is not always the outcome. It is worth quoting Jessop at length here:

Nonetheless formal adequacy does not guarantee the material adequacy of the capitalist type of state in the sense that the mere presence of this state form ensures that it secures the economic and extra-economic reproduction demands of the capitalist mode of production. On the contrary, extending the argument that form problematizes function (Offe 1984; Jessop 1982), we can say that *formal adequacy problematizes functional adequacy*. Because forms are the strategically selective medium through which the contradictions and dilemmas of the capital relation develop, there is a permanent tension between form and content. This tension calls for action to ensure that form and content complement each other and are

thereby functional for capital accumulation and political class domination” (Jessop, 2008, in Wetherly, Barrow, and Burnham (eds) 2008, pp. 137-38).

It should therefore be borne in mind that the establishment of the functional adequacy of capitalist production does not automatically lead to formal adequacy or a capitalist type of state, and inversely the formal adequacy can lead to a crisis in the functional adequacy of the integral state.

The concept of passive revolution is an oft-cited concept within the social sciences. It is the assumption here that the concept cannot be divorced from the historical roots of capitalist state formation and social relations. Passive revolution as state formation is the attempt by domestic élites to establish a capitalist hegemony through the implementation of reforms imported from abroad, while co-opting subaltern classes. The spark that ignites this process is the uneven relations of global capitalism. The historical aspect of passive revolution is, thus, in Gramsci’s theory, intrinsically linked to the dialectics of the historically U&CD of global capitalism. Scholars such as Adam D. Morton, Jamie C. Allinson and Alexander Anievas have thus pointed to the continuity and compatibility between Gramsci’s theory and Lev Trotsky’s concept of U&CD, and as argued by Allinson and Anievas, “Trotsky’s theory helps make explicit assumptions present in the *Prison Notebooks*, but never fully thematised” (Allinson and Anievas 2010, p. 474). To be clear then, Gramsci never explicitly refers to U&CD, but the centrality of uneven and combined spatial and temporal historical processes of capitalist development in Gramsci’s writings has been clearly observed and illuminated. An element central to the theory is the mimetic exercise that peripheral élites embark on in the quest to catch up as a result of the combined character of global capitalist development, which amalgamizes local and international forms of development. It is, according to Allinson and Anievas, exactly this combined element, which is the defining character of capitalist development. The capitalist state is the result of the “expansionary nature of capitalism’s ‘rules of production’” (Allinson and Anievas 2009, pp. 56-7), which forces capitals and nations into intense competition with each other.

What the U&CD attempts to describe then, is the unfathomable forces that were unleashed by the capitalist modes of production, and how this development forced this new system into a direct antagonistic relationship with other older modes of production. U&CD describes capitalism's "tendency to exacerbate the inherited unevenness of social development whilst simultaneously unifying its parts into a single ontological whole" (*ibid.*, p. 55). In other words, there is an inherent conflict between the tendency of capitalism to differentiate while unifying societies of the international system. This means that uneven societies are placed in increasingly direct opposition with each other – a situation that results in the simultaneous existence of social groups at different developmental stages within the same system. This dialectical amalgamation of international development means that the less developed borrow from the developed and are able to skip intermediate developmental stages – what Trotsky termed the "privilege of historic[al] backwardness" (Trotsky 2008, p. 4).

This intertwining of developed and backwards elements is, thus, an expression of the attempt of local élites to adapt imported ideology to local circumstances through the granting of concessions to strategic social groups, which is in return part of the process of passive revolution, where dominant social groups attempt to forge a web of alliances in order to establish hegemonic rule. In order not to lose sight of the class character of the state, the real starting point of the analysis is, thus, the local élites. As noted by Gramsci: "the line of development is towards internationalism, but the point of departure is 'national'" (Gramsci 1971, p. 240; Q14, §68, p. 1729). A dialectical and scalar tendency therefore presents itself, where international inequality is increasingly transferred to the domestic sphere, as capitalist development takes hold, whereas this development is being initiated from the domestic sphere by local élites, again as a response to external pressure. The temporal and spatial combined unevenness domestically, within the concept of passive revolution, is evident in the way Gramsci perceived it as a so-called blocked dialectic of new and old classes, vying for state power in the quest for hegemonic predominance (Morton 2011, p. 19), in other words a tendency exacerbated by the general amalgamation of old and new technology, policy and modes of

production. In the words of Gramsci, it is a situation where “the old is dying and the new cannot be born” (Gramsci 1971, p. 276; Q13, §34, p. 311). This temporal unevenness within the process of capitalist state formation is the result of accelerated capitalist development, spurred on by the contingencies of international market mechanisms.

The amalgamation of the combined element of U&CD is itself evident in the way in which the concepts of consent and coercion, hegemony and passive revolution, and *a state in capitalist society* and *the capitalist type of state* are applied. As noted by Morton, these concepts are not to be understood as absolute categories, but rather as “two points on a continuum” (Morton 2011, p. 21), so that the state complex is never “neither nor”, but always somewhere in between. In other words, it is a constant dialectical oscillation between the old and the new, existing simultaneously within the same system.

With this in mind we now turn to a description of the historical process of state formation in the pre-multiparty era.

2. U&CD and passive revolution in the pre-multiparty era

2.1 *The sick man of Europe*

The following section will sketch out a history of the uneven and combined character of capitalist state formation – one of the earlier mentioned aspects of passive revolution – in the late Ottoman Empire and the Republic of Turkey. We illustrate how the capitalist development of the modern Turkish state is rooted in the reforms of a Western-oriented nationalist state bureaucracy, acting as the entrepreneurs of capitalism in the absence of a strong and independent bourgeoisie.

As regards the U&CD of the nascent modern Turkish state, two important developments should be emphasized. First, the tributary character of the Ottoman Empire resulted in a centre-periphery dichotomy non-existent in Europe. This dichotomy resulted in delayed commercialization, as the bureaucracy retarded the development of local centres of power. Therefore, at the time of early capitalist reforms, Turkey was markedly agrarian, and generally unaccustomed to

private property in the countryside. The top-down, élitist rule of the mostly urban bureaucrats of the pre-multiparty era was thus unable to ideologically incorporate the agrarian masses. Second, there is the role of the state bureaucracy as the instigator of capitalist integration, in the absence of a developed bourgeoisie, which in its turn is rooted in the blocked development of a feudal landed class, and hence the absence of commercial agriculture. The latter of course signifies the amalgamation and skipping of stages that are characteristic of the combined aspect of capitalist development. The stunted development of the early Ottoman bourgeoisie, stemming from the tributary character of Ottoman social reproduction, and the subsequent emergence of the Young Turks, was an expression of the weakening of the Sultanate resulting from reforms implemented to save the Empire. Last, we shall deal with the establishment of nascent nationalism and anti-imperialism as the *sine qua non* common sense of the modern Turkish state.

During the eighteenth century, the military prowess of the modern European armies inflicted crushing defeats on the Ottoman armies, due to technical and economic advantages of capitalist development, which made clear the growing unevenness of the global order. The Ottoman palace bureaucracy came to realize that they were forced to implement political, military, and economic reform, if they wanted to avoid the dissolution of the Empire in the face of increasing European encroachments (Keyder 1987, pp. 27-28). “Under the whip of external necessity”, to use Trotsky’s phrase (Trotsky 2008, p. 5), the uneven global order was being felt as they were under increasing pressure to modernize in order to compete internationally. As we shall see, though, this wish to mimic European development also entailed an integration of the Empire into a European capitalist state system, and thus the simultaneous disintegration and finally dismemberment of the Empire that the reforms sought to protect.

Like Russia, the Ottoman Empire was in economic respects a backward country, and mostly an agrarian society at the eve of capitalist reforms. This was a consequence of the tributary system, inherited from the Byzantine era, where the central state bureaucracy would collect a single annual tax from a mainly independent, non-proletarianized, subsistence-based agricultural sector, cultivating state owned

land. Because of this fiscal arrangement, the bureaucracy was opposed to industrialization of the peasantry, as this would set in motion centrifugal processes through the privatization of agricultural land, and thus the loss of tax revenues and political control (Keyder 1987, pp. 11-12). Because of the decreased horizontal conflict between ruling elites, which was the opposite case in the feudal system, there was less impetus for technological development and productivity gains. Local centres of power were less inclined, and had less opportunity, to put the squeeze on peasants or invest in new technology. This resulted in better conditions for the peasants, who had no strong desire to rebel against a system that for the most protected their basic interests (Bromley 1994, p. 49; Nisancioglu 2013, pp. 335-6). As opposed to the feudal structure in Europe, where the horizontal conflict between different fiefdoms were predominant, in the Ottoman Empire it took on a more vertical character between the central palace bureaucracy and rural peripheral forces. Most of the Ottoman era can thus, to a certain extent, be seen as a struggle between the rural periphery and the central palace bureaucracy. The latter attempted to contain the development of peripheral centres of power, preventing local landlords from accruing revenues independently of the center (Keyder 1987, pp. 8-9). The emergence of the Ayans, local landlords who were gaining increasing power, but whose insurrection was quelled by the central state with the help of the British, is a poignant example (Keyder 1987, pp. 14-19).

According to Simon Bromley, the Ottoman Empire was highly dependent on the conquest of new land in order to keep up tax revenues, because of the above mentioned lack of incentives for endogenous growth, for instance through productivity gains (Bromley 1994: 48). When the Ottoman “Plunder machine” (*ibid.*) began to slow down, as Britain and France began to dominate the battlefields with their modern armies, the Ottoman economy soon found itself in grave need of finances. This resulted in increased taxes and the taking up of loans from foreign powers, while at the same time restrictions on exports of raw materials were loosened. The latter encouraged economic activity outside the purview of the central state apparatus,

and thus undermined the power of the central bureaucracy (Bromley 1994, pp. 49-51).

The increasing trade between the Ottoman Empire and the three empires of Britain, France and Russia simultaneously increased the uneven economic condition between the two sides, and drew them closer together in an intertwined and, although uneven, also interdependent relationship. As pointed out by Bromley, one of the main preconditions for the development of capitalism in the West was the presence of a vast market in the east from which to buy and sell goods “without hindrance” (Bromley 1994, p. 56).

The agents of this increasing European trade, who were overwhelmingly Christian and Greek or Armenian, were more interested in religious rights than appropriating state power, which meant that private property reforms and a general push for political representation was never really on the agenda of the majority of the bourgeoisie (Keyder 1987, p. 77). As a consequence, a strong bourgeoisie never emerged in the nineteenth century. Additionally, the state bureaucracy’s deliberate suppression of local landlords meant a landed élite never really developed in the Turkish part of the Empire, and, thus, halted feudalization, which could have led to mechanisation and industrialisation (Keyder 1987, pp. 10-11; Bromley 1994, p. 51). For these reasons, the bureaucracy was able to retain power throughout the nineteenth and most of the first half of the twentieth century – the bureaucracy’s dominance started to wain from 1950s onwards, with the introduction of democratic governance and emergence of bourgeois politicians who, to a great extent, were organic intellectuals of the bourgeoisie.⁴ This laid the ground for a “statization” of the economic developmental trajectory indicative to the process of passive revolution as state formation (Morton 2013, p. 149). It is a situation where the bourgeois capitalists were not “playing their assigned roles” (Allinson and Anievas 2010, p. 471), and thus a situation where the state felt compelled to take upon itself the role as the progressive force

⁴ Organic intellectuals in the sense defined by Gramsci as the strata of intellectuals created with the emergence of a new class (Gramsci 1971, p. 5; Q12, §1, p. 1513). Süleyman Demirel for instance, one of the great figures of Turkish politics and the leader of the Justice Party, is a poignant example, as he was an engineer by education and worked for an American transnational company before entering politics (Heper and Sayari 2002, pp. 88-9).

for capitalist development. As Gramsci noted, a passive revolution may be characterized by a situation where “a state replaces the local social groups in leading a struggle of renewal” (Gramsci 1971, pp. 105-106; Q15, §19, p. 1823). All this took place within an international atmosphere, in the period leading up to WWI, of protectionism and nationalist ideologies. The financial crisis of 1873 had furthered these tendencies (Keyder 1987, p. 3), and the social and economic changes brought on by the ‘Tanzimat reforms’⁵ caused considerable social upheaval and delegitimized the rule of Abdülhamid II. E. Attila Aytekin has thus analysed how increased and individualised taxes spurred substantial tax revolts throughout the reform period. As urbanization took hold, the revolts changed from being rural peasant in character to being urban partially bourgeois in the early twentieth century (Aytekin 2013, pp. 328-9). Coupled with centrifugal forces of the increasing export of raw materials and the authoritarian methods of the authorities, the weakened legitimacy of the central palace authorities paved the way for new actors to make their move. This was the moment of the Young Turks. In the late nineteenth century they had sprung out of the westernized segments of the bureaucracy that had emerged as parts of the modernizing reforms with the establishment of universities and military after western models (Keyder 1987, p. 28). They were firm believers in reform, nationalism and republicanism, and therefore, demanded the institutionalization of a constitutional monarchy, thereby abolishing the Ottoman Caliphate. With the Young Turks enjoying considerable support within the junior officers of the military in the early twentieth century, Sultan Abdülhamid II was forced to surrender to their demands in 1908 (Öncü 2003, pp. 311-12). This seminal event, known as the Young Turk revolution, marked a decisive turn in Turkish history, as Ahmed Öncü notes, for now the Empire had effectively abandoned the sultanate, which was based on religious authority, in exchange for the establishment of the political rule of a secular bureaucracy (Öncü 2003, p. 312). In a sense it also demonstrates the transforming power of capitalism, since feudal

⁵ The Tanzimat was a series of reforms implemented between 1839 and 1876 as an attempt, initiated and implemented by “Europeanized Ottoman bureaucrats” (Cleveland 2012: 82), to modernize the Ottoman Empire politically and economically following the European model.

Europe and the tributary Ottoman Empire had existed side by side for hundreds of years without changing the fundamental system of either. But with the power unleashed by the capitalist mode of production, all this changed, as it forced the Ottomans to reform themselves in the face of highly unequal power relations.

The Young Turks embarked on a campaign of protectionist economic policies aimed at developing a national economy and bourgeoisie independent of European powers (Ahmad 2008, p. 29). Central in this regard was the abrogation of the capitulations⁶ during WWI (*ibid.*, p. 29). As noted by Feroz Ahmad, during its only ten years in power the Young Turks managed to develop a weak, albeit independent national bourgeoisie. The Young Turk state, thus, played the role as the entrepreneur of a bourgeoisie, which was a process to continue under the Kemalists in the interwar years (Ahmad 2008, pp. 58-61).

The Young Turks, in a way, seized and directed the scattered and disorganized demonstrations of discontent by parts of the masses into a conservative reform project. Thus, Gramsci noted, when studying Italian history, how “‘progress’ occurs as the reaction of the dominant classes to the sporadic and incoherent rebelliousness of the popular masses – a reaction consisting of ‘restorations’ that agree to some part of the popular demands and are therefore ‘progressive restorations’, or ‘revolutions- restorations’, or even ‘passive revolutions’” (Gramsci 2007, p. 252; Q8 §25, p. 957). The constitutionalist and parliamentarian aspect of the Young Turk revolution was, thus, a progressive attempt to soothe political and economic discontent from below, while at the same time restoring, or preserving, the power of the dominant groups through capitalist reforms. The nineteenth century political history of the Ottoman Empire can, therefore, be perceived in large part as a struggle between modernizers and conservatives, resulting in a long line of reform / restorations⁷. The westernized bureaucracy – first the Young Ottomans and later the Young Turks – can be likened to the liberal constitutional reform movements throughout Europe in

⁶ For Gramsci’s brief comment on the topic of the capitulations, although mainly pertaining to Egypt, see Gramsci 1996, Q2§63 (pp. 218-9 of Valentino Gerratana’s 1975 Critical Edition).

⁷ The reform movements had, for instance, already in 1876 managed to press through the implementation of a constitution and parliament, but it was pulled back again by the sultan just two years later in 1878 (Taglia 2015, p. 4).

the nineteenth century. Indeed, as will be discussed below, these bureaucrats were directly inspired by these very European movements which Gramsci called “the form of ‘passive revolution’ specific to the nineteenth century” (Gramsci 2007, p. 378; Q8, §236, p. 1089).

As we have seen, the Young Turks’ movement was mostly a bureaucratic and military one that emerged out of the Ottoman palace bureaucracy. Young Turks distinguished themselves, by being mostly European educated, many of them hailing from military academies. These western-educated individuals came together with one specific goal in mind; to save the “fatherland” from extinction in the face of the encroachment of foreign powers (Taglia 2015, p. 29). As the membership increased rapidly, the party named the Ottoman Committee of Union and Progress (CUP) was established in 1889. The CUP, from the beginning, was marred by a schism between a liberal rights-minded faction and a more social conservative nationalist faction. Ernest E. Ramsaur notes how the international ideological currents of this period were against the more culturally liberal outlook of the former faction. Nationalism was advancing throughout Europe, and in the face of both the slow disintegration of the Empire, through separatist movements in the Balkans and Armenia, and the threat of imperialist European powers, a Turkish-Islamic and nationalist state central ideology seemed like the better fit. The nationalist Turkist faction, therefore, won the favour of the members of the CUP, and this would become the *de facto* ruling state élite of the Ottoman Empire until the end of WWI (Ramsaur 1957, p. 129). This process of ideological import by the Young Turks, well describes the tendency noted by Gramsci that the importers of ideology in the absence of “a local economic development” (Gramsci 1992, p. 229; Q1, §150, p. 133) are not the productive classes, but “the class of intellectuals” (*ibid.*). In this sense, then the Young Turk bureaucracy functioned as “the ‘intellectuals’ of the bourgeoisie” (Gramsci 1992, p. 150; Q1, §44, p. 53), just as Gramsci noted that the old feudal classes in Germany and England did (*ibid.*), in the sense that both were classes in themselves, but at the same time functioned as organic intellectuals for another class. The bureaucracy is the incumbent “old classes” (*ibid.*) bent on preserving the prevailing order through a process of reform /

restoration. There is, however, an inherent contradiction in the way that the Young Turks sought to save the Empire, and by extension preserving their own role in it, by intending to create a hitherto non-existent bourgeois; on the other hand the inevitable outcome of this process was the weakening of the central state bureaucracy itself. The bureaucracy thus “produces [...] its own grave-diggers” (Marx / Engels 1992, pp. 15-16), to use the words of Engels in a modified sense.

The Young Turk era, although relatively short lived, would lay the foundation for a central feature of the nascent Turkish state, which would prove to be quite salient among labour movements, namely an especially entrenched nationalist and anti-imperialist ideological outlook. Murat Kaya describes this as a “siege mentality”, which permeated the Young Turk movement and elicited the feeling that the state could be overrun by foreign enemies at any moment. It is worth quoting Kaya (2014, p. 142) at length here:

since this siege mentality and security perception, together with a strong scepticism and anxiety toward the West among the Young Turk generation, were intertwined with the emergence of Turkish nationalism, they would evolve into one of the main pillars of Turkish collective memory and remain one of the everlasting features of Turkish nationalism and Turkish nationalist discourse.

This mentality was mainly the result of economic encroachments of the West and the loss of the Balkan territories. Especially the latter, according to Kaya, elicited a sort of psychological trauma, as they felt betrayed by the West who tacitly supported the Balkan nationalists, while also making the Empire ethnically and religiously more homogenous (Kaya, p. 137).

In a sense, the uneven and combined characteristics of capitalist development is evident in the paradoxical process, that the Young Turks, and Ottomans before them, in order to become independent of the woes of western encroachments were forced to develop along western lines, and thus become further entangled in western influence and kept in an economically inferior relationship with it. This represents, in other words, the paradox inherent in U&CD: that the wish to equalize and separate, results in the opposite, namely unevenness and combination.

In the liberal atmosphere that ensued in the aftermath of the reinstatement of the constitution, under the nationalist rule of the Young Turks, several labour unions emerged mainly in the three urban centers of Istanbul, Izmir, and Salonica. During the highly unstable years of WWI and the years leading up to it, 46 strikes broke out. The CUP reaction to these strikes was by and large repression, with occasional incidents of mediation by the high ranking CUP members. In general, the CUP had functioned as the implementer of pro-business reforms and they would not allow the goal of national development and reform to be hampered by troublesome workers. According to Karakışla “both the Ottoman government and the Committee of Union and Progress were under the strong influence of national and foreign entrepreneurs.” (Quataert and Zurcher 1995, p. 33). The Young Turks, thus, during their time in power did not have the “luxury” to attempt to incorporate labour movements into the state structure through concessions. This is indicative of the temporal unevenness with which Turkey was developing. Political ideologies were imported from abroad, while the landscape of productive relations which had encouraged those ideologies abroad were entirely different in Turkey. Nationalism, emerging out of the Western industrialized countries as a method of popular integration and consent-building, were in Turkey applied to a by and large rural and non-commercialized society. The Turkish state was not yet dominated by market relations and, as a consequence, surplus extraction took on a distinct political and coercive character.

2.2 Kemalists, emerging industrialization and anti-imperialist common sense

In the interwar period the independence movement would come to consolidate the Republic of Turkey under the rule of General Mustafa Kemal. During the first decade of Kemalist rule, until the Great Depression in 1930, the Turkish economy was mostly an open economy, exporting basic agricultural goods. The new nation was still at this point almost entirely of an agrarian character, and the new regime did not embark on any significant restructuring of the economy during

this period. It was not until the 1930s that industrial policies were implemented, as a response to the Great Depression. The mimicking aspect of U&CD, which had spurred on nationalist state development since late Ottoman times, took the form of the emergence of a nationalist corporatist state ideology in the newly formed Kemalist state. Thus, according to Çağlar Keyder (1987, p. 89)

[n]ationalism was a modernizing ideology, specifically concocted for purposes of 'late-comer' states in the nineteenth century Europe. World War I and the League of Nations had ratified it as *the* state-building ideology for the many political units carved out of the Austro-Hungarian and Ottoman Empires.

The aim of this new nationalist regime was to "catch up with the level of contemporary civilisation" (Balkan and Savran 2002, p. 30). It was, however, not until the 1930s that such a nationalist corporatist state ideology would become formally institutionalized. As noted earlier, Gramsci perceived corporatism to be one form of passive revolution in the twentieth century, because, in David D. Roberts's phrase, it represented "a kind of halfway house" (Roberts 2011, p. 249) between the old liberal and highly individualistic economy and the modern organized economy. The corporatist industrialization policies also entailed the early attempts at controlling and integrating the working class, through the establishment of state-sponsored apolitical labour unions and confederations. As described by Feroz Ahmad, one of the first of these was the Association of Industrial Workers of Izmir, founded in 1932. This kind of state-sponsored unionization would become the norm, and anti-class, apolitical tendencies would become entrenched within the labour leadership until the 1960s (Quataert and Zurcher 1995, p. 92).

At the end of the decade, the world entered WWII during which "agrarian and merchant capital emerged with unprecedented rates of accumulation" (Gülalp 1985, p. 336). This was in large part due to increasing external demands for products, and Turkish exports grew in consequence (*ibid.*, p. 336). The increase in economic activity and exports, however, was attained through wide use of forced labour under state-of-emergency measures. The most poignant example was the activity in the Zonguldak (Mello 2007, p. 212) and Ereğli (Quataert

and Zurcher 1995, p. 140) mines on the Black Sea coast. In this period, enterprises had ample opportunity to increase productivity without having to worry about labour rights. This, for instance, resulted in deplorable working conditions in the coal mine of Ereğli, while productivity per worker and as a whole increased. Thus, coal production increased from 3,019,458 tons per day in 1940 to 3,559,848 tons per day in 1944 (*ibid*, pp. 140-41). The widespread existence of forced labour, especially during WWII, was indicative of an economy, which had not yet fully internalized the logic of the market, but was dependent on state repression for the accumulation of profits. As will be clear, the following period, with the implementation of multiparty politics in 1950 would represent the emergence of rapid industrialization and the growth of a market economy, resulting in the development of an increasingly extensive civil society. Before turning to this, however, we need to consider the ideological basis of the multiparty era, which was established in the inter-war years.

Through the brief historical analysis below it will become apparent how the Kemalists managed to establish nationalist and anti-imperialist developmentalism as a common sense⁸ of the modern Turkish state through a nationalist state ideology and strategic international alliances. The mimicking element within Kemalism, which perceived development along Western lines as the best and most effective way to escape subordination to the very same Western nations, is intertwined with anti-imperialist notions. As expressed by Sencer Ayata and Ayşe-Güneş Ayata (2007, pp. 214-5),

Kemalists look favorably to the West as a source of inspiration and as a model for cultural change, while at the same time blaming it as a source of imperialist conspiracy threatening Turkey's independence, sovereignty, and national unity.

Special attention will also be paid to the question of how anti-imperialist and nationalist developmentalist discourse became prominent in various labour movements throughout the Republican period, thereby opening up for the notion that national economic develop-

⁸ Common sense is here understood in the Gramscian sense as, to use the words of the editors of (Gramsci, 1971), "the uncritical and largely unconscious way of perceiving and understanding the world that has become "common" in any given epoch" (p. 322).

ment should be prioritized over class struggle (Boyraz 2012, p. 112). We shall illustrate how the dissemination of the Kemalist ideology of the dominant classes was more or less successful in reproducing itself, and how this was dependent on the ability of the dominant classes to include ideological elements acceptable to the subaltern classes: ideological concessions, if you will. The ability to make such concessions successful hinges especially on the ability of an ideology to contain contradictions without disintegrating. The capability of the dominant classes to create a hegemonic discourse that can accommodate contradictory ideological elements, and present them in a universal manner, is paramount since the successful integration of subordinate groups into an ideological discourse depends on the ability of the hegemonic class to incorporate elements from the world view of subordinate classes. Thus, according to Carnoy (1984, p. 70), citing Giroux (1981, p. 23),

The dominant fraction does not impose its own ideology upon the allied group; rather, it “represents a pedagogic and politically transformative process whereby the dominant class [fraction] articulates a hegemonic principle that brings together common elements drawn from the world views and interests of allied groups”.

As noted by Murat Belge, Turkish socialism and communism “grew up in the garden of Turkish nationalism” (Belge 2009, p. 7), and the nationalist independence movement quickly gained the support of workers’ and socialist movements during the War of Independence in 1919 and into the early 1920s. The workers’ support for the nationalist movements, and later the Kemalist government, was legitimized by the Communist International (Comintern), which supported the Kemalist cause, as aid in the anti-imperialist struggle at the Congress of the Peoples of the East in 1920. This gave the official stamp of approval to Kemalism by the leading authority within socialism and communism at the time, as a means to fight imperialist powers. Later in 1921, Turkey and the Soviet Union even signed a treaty “committing both countries to ‘the struggle against imperialism’” (Samim 1981, p. 63). This alliance endured even when the Kemalists would later on ban and persecute communism. Thus, despite the clear anti-communist policies of the Kemalists, the Soviets viewed the Kemalists as a central

instrument in the fight against imperialism (*ibid.*, p. 63). In this alliance, thus, nationalism and anti-imperialism served as the common ground on which socialist movements and Kemalists converged. A clear sign of the commitment of the workers to the nationalist struggle is the example of the Workers' and Peasants' Socialist Party of Turkey, founded as early as 1919, and an important and active protagonist in the struggle for independence. According to Feroz Ahmad, the party organized May Day protests against foreign intervention in 1921, and on this day, anti-imperialist and socialist slogans could be heard in the streets of all the major Turkish cities against the French, Greek, and British invaders (Quataert and Zurcher 1995, p. 79). Later, in the 1930s, a more theoretically well founded leftist Kemalist movement saw the light of day. The Kadro movement, consisting of a group of leftist intellectuals officially supported by Atatürk, were proponents of a form of non-capitalist development, where the surplus would be directed by the state for national development and popular prosperity (Belge 2009, p. 9). Cemil Boyraz (2012, p. 64) notes how

the principles of anti-imperialism and national developmentalism were usually deprived of the anti-capitalist character. This means that *Kadro's* étatist path to development was actually a capitalist type of accumulation project although they considered it as a 'third way' and 'peculiar' type of developmentalism different from socialist and capitalist types.

The main struggle was not between classes, but "between oppressed and oppressor nations" (*ibid.*) in the international arena. Likewise, the Turkish Communist Party, established in 1920, under the influence of Kadro and the Soviet Comintern, supported the Kemalist state, as a force against imperialism (Belge 2009, p. 10). The anti-imperialist and nationalist character of Turkish labour movements were, thus, present from the earliest days. The simultaneous birth of the Turkish nation and the labour movements coupled with legitimization for the Kemalist rule by foreign powers and the ideological common ground between anti-imperialism and socialism, and, thus, labour rights, engrained nationalism and anti-imperialism into the DNA of Turkish labour movements. In other words, international and domestic factors

intertwine spurred on by the intense pressure of capitalist forces to form a whole new amalgam of imported techniques and ideologies.

3. Passive revolution of the Turkish capitalist type of state – democracy, populism and formal adequacy; a new type of integration

In what follows we shall analyse the further formation and consolidation of the capitalist state and the concomitant refinement of the integrative techniques of passive revolution, and the role of labour movements therein. Attention will be given to how the ideology of the dominant classes, Kemalism, changed in accordance with the change away from an étatist accumulation model and towards a mixed Import Substituting Industrialization (ISI) economy, involving a growing private sector, civil society and accompanying civil rights. The state became more popularly founded and in general the use of consent as a tool of power became more prominent as labour unions were increasingly wooed by the political élite.

As described earlier, the developmental distinction between a state in capitalist society and the capitalist type of state is subject to the historical circumstances of U&CD, and a clear distinction between these two is, therefore, practically not possible. As with coercion and consent in a Gramscian framework, it is more a question of which theoretical aspect is most dominant. The modern state will never be completely modern, as there will always be remnants of old forces mixed with new. The following section, therefore, sets out to chart the emergence of the capitalist type of state in Turkey and the degree to which the modern integral state was dominated by the institutional separation of the political and economic.

With the new constitution of 1961 an ISI-regime was fully institutionalized in Turkey (Demiralp 2015, p. 6; Keyder 1987, pp. 150-51). ISI is “an economic strategy based on the sequenced expansion of manufacturing industry, with the objective of replacing imports” (Saad-Filho and Johnston 2005, p. 222). Central to this type of economic development is, thus, the nurturing of a domestic market, which can be partially achieved through the raising of living standards and wages through such measures as labour rights – collective

bargaining and strikes – and increased social benefits (Keyder 1987, pp. 149-51). This is the basis of the so-called “social state”, which was implemented after the coup in 1960 (Mello 2007, p. 218).

As the development of formal adequacy depends partially on the development of the rule of law, which upholds the image of equality before the law, and thus, formally eliminates the monopoly of power by any specific social group, we shall here draw attention to the development of important legal reforms in the multiparty era. In addition to this, the existence of associations outside the immediate realm of the state (civil society) is another important part of formal adequacy, as it strengthens the institutional separation between civil society and the state. The new legal reforms of the 1960s were a result of a desire by the army to prevent the strong majority governments, which had been characterized by the Democrat Party (DP) era of the 1950s, and of the desire to bolster the new ISI-oriented economy with a strong domestic market to create demand for the industrial bourgeoisie. The former was attained through the establishment of a bicameral parliamentary system, with low electoral thresholds, and the latter through the granting of rights to organize freely in labour unions and the rights to strike and to collective bargaining (Bianchi 1984, p. 115; Keyder 1987, p. 149). The latter pluralist reforms had major effects on the development of a civil society that was institutionally separated from the state. To trace this development thoroughly, we need to go back slightly further than the multiparty era. As parts of the regime’s efforts at slowly opening up the political system, in order to partially stem a tide of growing domestic discontent with authoritarian single-party rule and to appease Turkey’s international partner, the US (Mello 2007, p. 213), the Law of Associations was implemented in 1946. With this piece of legislation in place, it was suddenly legal to establish associations based on social class, although it was still illegal for labour unions to engage in political activities. It was a “pre-emptive strategy” (Kus and Ozel 2010, p. 5) carried out by the government in order to control and integrate the labour unions that were already emerging into the political system (Kus and Ozel 2010, p. 5; Mello 2007, p. 214). Turkish associational life before the period beginning in 1946 was thus mainly characterized by the prevalence of sporting

clubs, concentrated in Istanbul, Izmir and Ankara. As noted by Richard D. Robinson “In the case of the Anatolian villager, the individual generally belongs to no organization other than the family-village community, the village mosque [...] and the Nation” (Robinson 1951, p. 431). He further explains how in Gaziantep, a city with 70.000 inhabitants, there were no other organization than the two political parties, the Republican People’s Party (CHP) and DP (*ibid.*). This changed, however, with the new law, as the number of associations multiplied eight times to reach over 17,000 nationwide in 1960 (Bianchi 1984, p. 155). According to Bianchi, “the number of associations per million people grew from 40 in 1946 to over 100 by 1950, to 620 in 1960, and then to 1,200 by 1970” (Bianchi 1984, p. 155). With the constitution of 1961 and the trade union act of 1963, associability experienced further hikes, as the latter piece of legislation granted the right to freely establish labour unions, and the right to collective bargaining and strikes, as well as “allowing the formation of local unions at the work place, federations of unions in the same branch of industry, regional labor unions, as well as national confederations” (Kus and Ozel 2010, p. 7). The nature of the associations established were many fold, and under the rule of the DP government religious organizations and the Imam Hatip schools⁹ proliferated greatly (Jacoby 2004, p. 113). As we shall see many new political parties, political labour unions, and employer unions also appeared between 1950 and 1980 as a result of these legal reforms.

With the implementation of the above mentioned labour laws, the formal adequacy of the state was strengthened, as collective bargaining was implemented and coercion excluded from the immediate organisation of labour. Orhan Tuna describes how labour / employer negotiations prior to 1963 were virtually impossible, because labour did not have any leverage in the form of the right to strike, and contracts up until this point were mainly individual, further weakening bargaining leverage of the worker (Tuna 1964, p. 427). With the implementation of the new labour law of 1963, collective bargaining and the right to strike were institutionalized, and hailed by leading politicians at the time as an integral part of democracy (Jackson 1971,

⁹ Imam Hatip schools are state secondary schools for the education of public Imams in Turkey.

p. 71). This new legislation was meant to level the playing field between employers and employees, and thereby live up to the new constitution as laying the foundation of the “social state” (Mello 2007, p. 218). Employees were no longer dependent on the mercy of the employer; as Tuna (1964, p. 429) notes

Most of the employment practices that were unquestionably within the unilateral decision-making area of the employer in the past, such as the power to discipline and punish, safety and health provisions, overtime work, etc., have been brought under the joint administration of workers and management.

These reforms of the modern Turkish state transpired within the uneven characteristics of capitalist development in Turkey, taking a distinct East-West expression, which revealed itself in both spatial and temporal terms in the period in question. The combination of pre-capitalist and capitalist production is illustrated poignantly in Keyder’s (1987, p. 119) remark that

One report by an American expert deplored the gap between isolated examples of “twentieth century industrial technology” in state enterprises, and agricultural techniques which dated from Hittite times.

Even with the influx of US aid under the Marshall plan in the 1950s, uneven development persisted as 63% of the investment was channeled to the already prosperous Marmara region and 12% to the Aegean region, both located in the west of the country. This tendency reinforced an East-West divide in Turkey, which has shaped the economic development of the modern Turkish state. The eastern regions have, since the seventeenth century, been characterized by large-estate feudal-like land ownership. In the 1950s, 60s and 70s, the U&CD was expressed through the simultaneous and ongoing primitive accumulation in the eastern, predominantly Kurdish regions, dislocating peasants from their land, as mechanization took hold of agriculture (White 1998, pp. 150-51), and the capitalist profit accumulation mainly in the coastal and western regions. Such developments were strengthened by geographically integrating and connecting Anatolian cities through the construction of extensive road networks in the

1950s (Keyder 1987, pp. 127-28), which served as the “geographical expansion of capitalist society” (Morton 2011, p. 71).

With the increasing monopolization of agriculture, 18-20% of cultivated land was controlled “by large-estate capital” by 1957, and according to Bianchi 3% of landowners controlled 30% of cultivated land in 1973 (Bianchi 1984, p. 64; Jacoby 2004, p. 107). The growing landless peasantry either migrated to urban areas in the hope of securing occupation or became agricultural wage labourers. The comprehensive urban migration experienced in this period accentuated the clash between rural and urban cultures. Peasants arriving in the cities, many of whom were Kurds, retained their rural identities and organized themselves along ethnical and regional lines, instead of developing a sense of class (Jacoby 2004, p. 108-9; Keyder 1987, pp. 136-7 and 206). Likewise, many of the employers of the industrial bourgeoisie in the 1950s and 60s had their recent roots in the agricultural sector or as provincial merchants, and were not used to command a workforce. As a consequence they retained “an individualistic mentality and [...] did not sympathise with workers’ problems.” (Tuna 1964, p. 422). Such a mentality was expressed through a very confrontational attitude towards organized labour of the earliest private sector employer organization, TISK. It resulted in protracted lockouts, labour riots and a great deal of instability (Bianchi 1984, p. 264-67). It was not until 1971 that the geographical unevenness between rural and more modern industrial mentality of employers was partially overcome, as a more mature group of bourgeois industrialists saw the light of day. They found common ground in the establishment of the employer organization TÜSIAD, which consists of 90 of the biggest industrialists in Turkey. These entrepreneurs had grown to a size where they were increasingly focused towards exports to international markets, and were highly emphatic on the importance of joining the European Economic Community (EEC). They, therefore, perceived the aggressive approach applied by TISK as provoking unnecessary class antagonism and volatility thereby “jeopardizing Turkey’s chances of entering the Common Market with a Western-style democracy.” (Bianchi 1984, p. 269). Bianchi states that they represented a new current of “progressive conservatism” that sought

to moderate the authoritarian style of TISK (*ibid.*). In addition they proposed to deepen industrialization in Anatolia in order to decrease the extreme concentration of industry in Istanbul and to show greater concern for social justice and welfare (Bianchi 1984, p. 269). TÜSIAD, therefore, represented an attempt by parts of the big industrial complex to influence the political authority into a more accommodating approach to labour issues, as the labour-business conflicts were creating political havoc, thus jeopardizing capital accumulation. The above-described developments represent a refinement of the process of passive revolution through the increasing internalization of the logic of the market of the integral state and the adaption to a recognition of certain concessions – in the form of democratic rights, and increased economic distribution – as means to secure more stable conditions for accumulation of profits. The two employer organizations of TISK and TÜSIAD, however, continued to pursue their individual political paths throughout the 1950s, 60s and 70s.

Another temporal aspect of the passive revolution of especially the 1960s and 70s, which illustrates the uneven divisions within the bourgeois class, was the intra-class conflict between the “old” trading bourgeoisie and the nascent industrial bourgeoisie within the umbrella employer organization Union of Chambers and Commodity Exchanges of Turkey, or Türkiye Odalar Birliği (TOB). This ongoing conflict revolved around the accruing of import licenses, and thus, scarce foreign exchange reserves. The support of the export-oriented DP governments of the 50s tilted in the favour of the traders, whereas the industrialists received more political support in the ISI period after 1960. Even though the industrialists gained political support, the TOB, which had the right to allocated import licenses after 1960, was dominated by traders. The frustration of the industrialists within the TOB led to several open conflicts and divisions during the 1960s and 1970s, and in 1969 a “rebellion” within the TOB, initially instigated by the Anatolian merchants and later joined by many industrialists, nearly split the organization in two (Bianchi 1984, p. 255-7).

From a Gramscian perspective, these struggles between the merchants’ and industrialists’ interests, and the more traditional and conservative TISK and the progressive TÜSIAD, are central, because

they represent the dialectical struggle of the old and new forces inherent to the process of passive revolution. Or as Morton would have it “There is therefore a dialectic of revolution and restoration that becomes blocked in a situation of passive revolution as neither the old nor new class forces become hegemonic” (Morton 2011, p. 19).

3.1 Schumpeterian democracy and unionism

In the preceding section, we saw how the uneven and combined conditions in the domestic arena affected the bourgeoisie, while here we shall analyse how international conditions of U&CD affected labour unions and their tacit support for a specific form of democracy.

The liberal democratic regime emerging in Turkey in the 1940s was embedded within an international cold war atmosphere. After WWII the US quickly realized the importance of Greece and Turkey, as a bulwark against the Soviet Union. The pressing situation in Greece, where a communist insurgency was taking place, made this realization all the more urgent (Kayaoğlu 2009, p. 325). Out of this moment the Truman Doctrine entered the stage. This was a foreign policy initiative, which established that it was the obligation of the “United States to support free people who are resisting attempted subjugation by armed minorities or by outside pressures” (Kayaoğlu 2009, p. 327). Turkey became the beneficiary of large amounts of aid and military funding, and the US administration praised the Turkish transition to democracy as a victory for the free world. While such praise was given, internally the US administration was more concerned for the stability of the regime and its position as a bulwark against communism (Kayaoğlu 2009, p. 327). Such a two-faced approach to democracy promotion has, according to Morton, been symptomatic for US foreign policy. This direction of policy is rooted in a Schumpeterian perception of a minimal standard of democracy, as an institutional design, which does not allow the rule of the people in the literal sense – this was perceived as leading to anarchy – but instead gives people a restricted choice between competing political elites (Morton 2011, pp. 169-75). This is seen as the optimal way to allow for some sort of

popular influence, while safeguarding the functionality of the system of governance. Such a definition of democracy is, from a Gramscian perspective, a bourgeois ideology, as it reproduces the separation between politics and economics inherent in capitalist relations of production. According to Morton, this “low intensity democracy” discourse has been an integral part of US foreign policy since 1945-1955, and involves the promotion of moderate civil society organizations (Morton 2011, pp. 174-77). In the early days of the multiparty era, this took the form of the promotion of apolitical unionism in Turkey by the American labour union AFL (and as from 1955 the AFL-CIO). The concentration of workers in apolitical labour unions and confederations was perceived as a necessity in order to stem the tide of socialist and communist sympathies and leading members of the AFL were thus instrumental in the creation of Türk-İş (Mello 2007, p. 216). In the pursuit of such aims, Türk-İş right from its founding received considerable amounts of foreign funding and organizational support from international organizations, such as the ILO, the ICFTU¹⁰ and the US. According to Theo Nichols, Nadir Sugur and Erol Demir, Türk-İş received an amount of aid from the US – the Agency for International Development (AID) was especially generous – equivalent to its membership dues between 1960 and 1970 (Bianchi 1984, p. 215; Jackson 1971, p. 74; Nichols, Sugur, and Demir 2002, p. 25). In fact, it has been argued that Türk-İş would not have been able to exist had it not been for the large amounts of foreign funding it received. The AFL-CIO was very active abroad since the very beginning of the Truman Doctrine and the Point Four Program, which was the technical assistance program for third world countries. In 1956, the AFL-CIO leader George Meany stated that “labor will support a program of substantial military and economic aid to other free nations to protect them from being forced to yield to communism” (Hagen and Ruttan 1987, p. 23). Such a policy was not a result of a US Government or CIA program, but was developed as a result of the reformist labour ideology of the founder of the AFL, Samuel Gompers. He was a fierce anti-communist union leader, the promoter of so-called “business unionism”, a form of labour unionism whose

¹⁰International Confederation of Free Trade Unions

activities involve solely the improvement of workers' rights within the existing framework of capitalism. Gompers unequivocally stated that "the AF of L stands squarely and unequivocally for the defense and maintenance of the existing order and for its development and improvement" (Scipes 2011, p. 7). Practically, business unionism has been characterized by an absence of any measure to educate its rank-and-file members, an above-party political stand and a lack of internal democracy (*Ibid.*, pp. 4-7). Within the Gramscian framework, then, this kind of unionism reproduces the separation of politics and economics inherent in liberal democracy and political science, and the promotion of such a labour-union ideology among the working classes in developing countries became an important part of US efforts to contain the development of communism among workers during the cold war (Mello 2007, p. 216).

The AFL-CIO was, thus, intensely involved in the establishment and organization of the biggest Turkish labour confederation Türk-İş and, as a consequence, Türk-İş has always been the stronghold of apolitical, conservative, business unionism in Turkey. Practically, this has manifested itself in the acceptance of labour-saving technology and declining employment, a lack of union democracy, a strict hierarchy in which an élite within the working class has attained increased wages through uneven use of collective bargaining, and close collaboration with conservative governments (Bianchi 1984, pp. 234-37). This semi-symbiotic relationship with the incumbent governments and the state bureaucracy is hinted at in its union regulations, which "include a commitment to 'a high level of national democratic secular and social and state structure based on Atatürk's principles and the Constitution' (article 3, TÜRK-İŞ Regulations)." (Nichols, Sugur, and Demir 2002, p. 25). Furthermore, Türk-İş has always made great efforts to distance itself from socialist ideology – up until the 1990s, for instance, it purposely did not use the word "working class", employing the less ideologically charged word "workers' movement" (Bacik and Dede 2012, p. 802).

With the change in political leadership and a complete overhaul of the legal framework of the state in the post-1960 coup era, which signified the further strengthening of the formal adequacy of the state

through the above-mentioned reforms of strengthening plurality, the rule of law and labour rights, new labour confederations emerged. Thus, in the 1960s a new labour confederation called DISK – the Confederation of Revolutionary Labor Unions – saw the light of day. The emergence of DISK, represented a reaction to the employer friendly and apolitical policies of Türk-İş, and a turn towards socialist, political unionism.

In the 1960s and 70s, DISK was the spearhead or peak-association for political unionism. It was founded in 1967 by four labour unions breaking away from Türk-İş in defiance of the latter's dependence on foreign aid and close corporatist relations with the governing parties (Dereli 1968, pp. 221-2). DISK became the flag bearer of political unionism and would signify a general politicization of Turkish unionism, even within Türk-İş. It thus “openly advocated getting involved in political unionism for the purpose of promoting the revolutionary consciousness of workers and supporting the political party which would defend their interests” (Cizre-Sakallıoğlu 1992, p. 721). The tenets of DISK dictated that “There is need, therefore, to reshape the whole economy along socialistic lines and give an end to all forms of foreign and capitalistic exploitation.” (Dereli 1968, *loc. cit.*). As will become evident in the subsequent section, the ability of the CHP, under the leadership of Bülent Ecevit, to promote moderates within DISK resulted in the support for the former by the latter in the elections of 1977. Despite its socialist credentials DISK was, with time, integrated into the orbit of nationalist Kemalist political relations, thus giving consent to the rule of dominant classes.

As established in previous sections, the emergence of nationalism and anti-imperialism as common sense was continuously accepted by labour movements of the multiparty era, partly as a result of foreign intervention. It is thus argued by Cemil Boyraz that the Turkish workers and labour unions in the multiparty era focused on “rapid national economic development” and, in consequence,

due to both peculiarist-essentialist-reductionist theoretical approaches and international inspirations from different struggles in the Third World and the Soviet policies [...] the Turkish Left continued to prioritize the relation with nationalism over class politics. (Boyraz 2012, p. 112)

Furthermore, the business-unionism of the largest labour confederation, partially encouraged by the US, resulted in the reproduction of the division between the political and economic spheres inherent to the modern liberal and capitalist state. Remember that Gramsci noted that this separation was merely “methodological” (Gramsci 1971, p.160; Q13, §18, p. 1590, *cit.*) in the sense that an institutional separation is indeed taking place, but it does not represent the actual power structures on which the state rests – i.e. “This separation is both *real* and *illusory*” (Jessop, 2008, in Wetherly, Barrow, and Burnham 2008, p. 146). Thus, the two above-mentioned factors contributed to the continued reproduction of this separation. According to Gramsci, exactly this separation blurs the class character of the state, and thereby, legitimizes the rule of the dominant groups by portraying certain ideological premises, as beneficial to the labour cause, while they in fact further the cause of the dominant groups. A stumped Schumpeterian form of democracy was thereby indirectly promoted by labour unions.

3.2 *The new bourgeois parties*

With the emergence of representative democracy, and a growing civil society and private sector, the ideological basis of the dominant state classes changed to a more inclusive strategy of social control. The repressive policies of the single-party regime had alienated workers and the rural masses. In this sense, there are indications of a refinement of the ideology of the dominant classes taking place in the face of a crisis of legitimacy after the heavy-handed repression by the government during WWII (Balkan and Savran 2002, p. 34). Two developments will be emphasized here: the development of a more religious, anti-élitist discourse by the governing party, and legal concessions for the working classes, as well as political recognition of certain labour organizations.

The subsequent sections will present a more specific Gramscian political analysis of the bourgeois parties and their attempts at estab-

lishing hegemonic alliances, and of the integration of labour unions in the period 1950-1980. The emergence of the DP in the 1940s and its political discourse and tactics of popular mobilization in the periphery of Turkey would become symptomatic for centre-right parties in the following decades; here especially we are thinking of the Justice Party (JP). There was a general tendency within these parties to perceive their popular mandates as an expression of the “national will”, thus attempting to universalize their policies and make them the simple execution of the nation at large. Such an approach was meant to legitimize the sometimes non-accommodating and coercive policies towards labour. Gramsci recognized this, when he noted: “the attempt is always made to ensure that force will appear to be based on the consent of the majority” (Gramsci 1971, p. 80, note 49; Q13, §37, p. 1638). These populist tendencies in praxis resulted in the party élites to neglect the demands and aspirations of minority groups (Heper and Sayari 2002, pp. 78-80 and 99). One such minority group was the working class and the institutions claiming to represent them, such as Türk-İş. The majoritarian democratic tendencies coupled with the fervent anti-communist political lines of these parties prevented them from ideological integrating the working class. Unlike the experience in Mexico, where Morton describes the legalization of the Communist Party and the subsequent merger with other parties, meaning that “the PCM [Partido Comunista Mexicano] [...] effectively dissolved itself while attempting to electorally compete” (Morton 2011, p. 121), the Turkish left and workers’ movements mostly stayed on the fringes of parliamentary politics¹¹. At best, the right wing bourgeois parties’ alliances with labour movements were based on piecemeal legal concessions. As will be evident, this was the strategy of both the DP and JP.

The leaders of the DP understood where the CHP had failed during single-party rule in the preceding decades and took full advantage of it. This entailed portraying themselves as the party of the periphery, of Turkish folklore, of the religious and of the private entrepreneurs

¹¹ The relative electoral success of the Turkish Labour Party (TİP – Türkiye İşçi Partisi) and its entrance into parliament in 1965 is naturally not neglected or forgotten, but it is simply considered to be outside the scope of the article. However, as described by Erkan Doğan, the internal conflicts of the party led it to dissolve only four years after it entered parliament (Doğan 2010, pp. 324-5).

(Heper 1976, p. 495), which was in stark contrast to the elitist and metropolitan character of the CHP. They referred to the repressive policies during WWII with slogans such as “Artık Yeter” (“really enough!”) (Leder 1979, p. 85), and openly opposed the militant secularism of the CHP (Eligür 2010, p. 52). The latter gained them the support from the Islamic brotherhoods, who helped mobilize significant numbers of voters for a successive line of center-right parties beginning with the DP (Eligür 2010, p. 52). Thus, the ascendancy of the DP witnessed a restructuring of society, both economically, and rhetorically, as producers outside the immediate realm of the state (understood in the non-integral sense) slowly gained ascendancy.

Even though the DP was critical of the élitist, urban and secular character of the Kemalist bureaucracy, it and its successor parties stayed within the confines of Kemalist ideology. The founders of the party were themselves former CHP members and officials in the bureaucracy – some even ministers in the governments of the single-party era (Ahmad 2003, p. 153). The DP could thus not be perceived as an alternative to Kemalism, but rather as a re-interpretation, or refinement, if you will, of the Kemalist ideology of the dominant groups.

With the implementation of the first free elections in 1950, the DP won the elections by a wide margin – 54 percent of the popular vote (Szyliowicz 1966, p. 276). Based on the policies described above, the DP government managed to create a broad alliance of diverse social classes, consisting of the landed élite, the peasants, much of the working class, and the private sector industrial and commercial bourgeoisie, who had grown weary of bureaucratic constraints and domination of the economy (Cizre-Sakallıoğlu 1992, p. 713; Jacoby 2004, p. 104; Mello 2007, pp. 214-5). Consent for DP rule was given by the working classes in exchange for the promise of the granting of the right to strike. However, by 1952, it became clear that such concessions would not be granted. The government was true to its national developmentalist discourse, where economic development of the nation was the primary concern, and anything that would impede the accumulation of capital was out of the question (Mello 2007, p. 215). Instead of the right to strike, the DP government was able to entertain a strenuous alliance with the working class, now represented by Türk-

İş, by incorporating the leadership and offering other piecemeal legal concessions, such as paid weekends, annual leave, minimum wage, and labour tribunals with a worker serving as judge (Mello 2007, pp. 216-7).

This relationship between labour and the DP government was sustained for as long as the economy was kept afloat. With the advent of declining agricultural exports in 1954, the hegemonic alliances established in the elections of 1950 and 1954 began to show serious cracks. As the industrial bourgeoisie grew stronger and more independent, it began to articulate demands, irreconcilable with the patronage-driven and agriculturally-oriented economic policies of the DP lawmakers (Öncü 2003, pp. 317-8). Furthermore, the distribution of scarce foreign exchange, through the control of import licenses, along non-market lines, according to arbitrary criteria, such as political patronage, was creating bottle-necks for the industrial bourgeoisie, to their great frustration (Keyder 1987, pp. 145 and 171). In true populist style, the DP government refused to cut spending despite a mounting trade deficit, and increased money printing, with inflation as the immediate result (*ibid.*, p. 133). This led to increasing dissatisfaction with the government within urban salaried segments, as price levels were rising at a fast pace. Furthermore, the hollowing out of the economic benefits of the bureaucracy under DP rule made them highly unpopular amongst this group (Szyliowicz 1966, p. 278).

The new government's lack of ability to cope with criticism in the face of adversity would become its demise. As criticism was mounting from several areas of Turkish society, which had formerly rallied behind the government, it began responding with increasingly heavy-handed approaches. Civil liberties, such as press freedom, fair and free elections, freedom of speech, and the right to assembly were curbed in order to silence the opposition (Ahmad 1977, p. 53; Szyliowicz 1966, p. 278). The labour movement soon felt this tightening of political power when, in the aftermath of the Istanbul riots, the government seized the opportunity which martial law presented to close down unwanted labour unions that were considered a threat (Bianchi 1984, p. 216). The reaction of the government to criticism from its electorate, is an example of the dominant group that starts to dominate instead of leading. Gramsci noted how "the supremacy of a social

group manifests itself in two ways, as “domination” [*dominio*] and as “intellectual and moral leadership” (Gramsci 1971, p. 57; Q19, §24, p. 2010). A crisis becomes a crisis of hegemony, when domination comes to the forefront and reveals the self-preserving character of the dominant group. In the years that followed political instability grew and anti-government demonstrations appeared with a steady frequency throughout the country, until the army decided to intervene in 1960 (Ahmad 1977, pp. 57-58). A hegemonic crisis had emerged, severing the ties established between societal groups. The persistent support for the “old” agricultural class, together with economic crisis, had jeopardized one of the central alliances of the integral state system. The military and bureaucracy who perceived themselves as the guardians of the Kemalist “mission” to modernize society had sided with the industrialists (Öncü 2003, pp. 317-18).

The 1960s and 70s witnessed a situation where the growth of the working classes and urban migration changed the demographic landscape of Turkey to a degree hitherto unknown. As many as 650,000 rural migrants settled in the larger urban areas in the mid-1970s (Özbudun and Ulasan 1980, pp. 271-2). This posed a challenge for the bourgeois political parties, who were forced to accommodate the demands of such groups. The establishment of the social state after 1960 encouraged a development within the intellectual political cadres of the bourgeoisie to direct focus to issues of redistribution. On the national scale, the State Planning Organization implemented policies aimed at directing economic activity towards the less developed eastern regions (Özbudun and Ulasan 1980, pp. 73-4). The new parliamentary system, with low electoral thresholds and liberal associational legislation led to a proliferation of different political parties, all emphasizing redistribution policies in different shapes. The conservative center-right bourgeois party, the JP, aligned with the approach of the conservative and militant industrialists within TOB and TISK, employed a discourse of rapid growth now and redistribution later (Özbudun and Ulasan 1980, p. 75). This was reflected in the way that the party attempted to persuade labour leaders to give concessions in the form of reduction of demands for redistribution in return for representational monopolization. This policy was an attempt

by militant industrialists to minimize the rising labour costs, which were a direct effect of the rights enshrined in the constitution, and to isolate the emergence of the more militant unions in DISK. The representation by JP intellectuals of the larger industrialists resulted in a situation, where the demands of smaller businessmen, who were exploited by bigger industrialists, were neglected. The short-sightedness of industrialists represented through the policies of their major representative, the JP, and the inability of JP to solve the conflict within TOB between industrialists and merchants led to consecutive breakdowns in the consent of JP patronage networks within two integral state institutions.

The first occurred in 1969, when Necmettin Erbakan led a coup within TOB with the backing of larger industrialists and smaller Anatolian businessmen. The JP managed to avert the crisis in the end, as allied employers were able to nullify Erbakan's election to the presidency of TOB (Bianchi 1984, p. 256). The second and more profound crisis of legitimacy occurred when labour riots broke out in 1970 as a response by workers from the Istanbul-Izmit area within Türk-İş to perceived injustice at the hands of a conservative leadership and its close ties to the JP government out of touch with the demands of their members. It was the most violent display of workers' dismay in Turkish history, and the army had to be deployed to quell the uprising (Bianchi 1984, p. 202). Not long after, the JP government was given an ultimatum to step down, and thus the second coup of the multiparty era was a reality. When parliamentary governance was resumed in 1973, reforms had been implemented to curtail the range of agency of institutions, notably an amendment restricting associational activity by the technocratic government (*ibid.*, 205).

The elections in 1973 were won by a revamped CHP. The former corporatist state-party had undergone significant changes since 1965. Spurred on by the loss of intellectual voters to the Turkish Worker's Party, the CHP announced its new status as a centre-left (or social democratic) party. Reformist groups, such as social democrats, were, according to Gramsci, from the point of view of the dominant class a form of passive revolution (Showstack Sassoon 1980, p. 213). Thus, the emergence of Bülent Ecevit as the leader of the CHP in the 1970s

and the CHP's attempts to cultivate social democratic leadership in both Türk-İş and DISK constituted a refinement in the passive revolution of the working class. Until this point, the dominant bourgeois parties had applied a strategy that entailed a non-ideological integration of workers through piecemeal concessions; however, with the emergence of social democratic ideology in Turkish politics, an attempt at integration of workers was made both at the immediate economic and ideological level. The CHP's party programme of 1976 entailed a focus on growth and redistribution, emphasizing that both were possible at the same time, and indeed declaring that responsible development could not occur without the latter. In this way, the CHP attempted to reframe the concept of economic growth, distinguishing between "growth" and "development", claiming that the former entails a myopic focus on economic factors, while the latter is a holistic approach concerned with a whole range of humanistic factors beside the economic (Özbudun and Ulusan 1980, p. 69). Additionally, the CHP had abandoned its adherence to strict étatism, as the party programme stipulated the support for private sector development (Özbudun and Ulusan 1980, p. 68). The CHP's platform of development and social justice were, moreover, garnering a lot of votes from the large urban centres, and the party pushed for policies enhancing local municipal autonomy and increasing allocation of resources for urban squatter settlements (Özbudun and Ulusan 1980, p. 332).

On such a platform, which had been developed in the early 1970s, but not formalized before 1976, the CHP entered governments in 1973 and 1976. The 1970s provided the CHP with a difficult and tumultuous environment for the realization of their hegemonic quest. The effects of the international oil crisis were being felt as remittances decreased, unemployment increased and foreign exchange reserves were hollowed out (Keyder 1987, pp. 185, 188 and 195). This encouraged further activism on the part of TİSK, which had been embarking on consecutive and protracted industry-wide lockouts since the early 1970s. Thus, in 1976 "employers in the metal goods industry united [...] to launch a larger and more successful national lockout that dragged on for nearly two years" (Bianchi 1984, p. 267). On the other hand, the CHP had slightly more success in integrating labour unions

into its political orbit. The continued efforts by the CHP to moderate DISK by promoting social democratic unionists within the confederation, bore fruit when the party gained the support of DISK in the 1973 and 1977 elections (Blind 2008, p. 47).

The rise of social democratic ideology within the CHP encouraged the development of several right wing coalition governments in the 1970s – the so called Nationalist Front governments (Ahmad 1977, pp. 327-54). The fervent anti-communism and anti-socialism of the two major parties in this coalition, the JP and the ultranationalist Nationalist Movement Party (MHP), added to the centrifugal tendencies of the period. The rise of the MHP epitomizes the predomination of coercion attributed to the process of passive revolution. First of all, the party functioned as an institution integrating the petty-bourgeois producer class left behind by the rapid large-scale industrial growth implemented by the JP. In this sense, the MHP functioned as an appendage to the JP which secured the continued support of the groups which had been neglected by the policies of the JP itself. Secondly, the coercive aspect lay in its unofficial affiliation with paramilitary ultra-nationalist groups, which were used to suppress increasing left-wing activism. The JP tacitly allowed and even encouraged such activity (Balkan and Savran 2002, p. 153; Jacoby 2004, pp. 139-40). This development is emblematic of the kind of development described by Gramsci: “A weakened state organization is like an enfeebled army; the *arditi*, that is the private armed organizations, enter the field with a double task: to use illegality, while the state appears to remain within legality, and as a means to reorganize the state itself.” (Gramsci 1992, p. 217; alternative translation in Gramsci 1971, p. 232; Q1, §133, p. 121).

The militancy of left wing groups, who were engaged in a war of movement, in the hope of toppling the bourgeois state through armed intervention, preferably with the help of progressive army officers, coupled with the violent opposition of right wing para-military groups, led to street violence to such a degree that the armed forces chose to carry out its third Caesarist coup in 30 years. This portended the end of the road for the ISI accumulation regime and its attendant political structure, i.e. the social state.

5. *Conclusion*

It is the contention of this article that Gramscian theory provides us with illuminating insights into the undercurrents of the deeper power structures of the modern Turkish state. We have attempted to clarify the capitalist origins and nature of the modern Turkish state, emerging as a product of the accumulative relations of capitalist production within a U&CD, which shaped the social, ideological and material relations of Turkish society. Gramscian concepts provides us with insightful knowledge regarding the contradictory labour policies of the period in question, because his approach highlights the highly complex and inherently contradictory nature of the modern Turkish (integral) state. In this sense, one cannot in fact talk of state policies *towards* labour, as if the state was a singular coherent body, as this implies that the state is something extraneous to civil society. The integral state is an amalgam of forces and social groups ripe with contradictions and demands. Furthermore, the integral state, contrary to the Weberian state tradition, is defined as both coercion and consent. This entails that Turkish institutions, such as labour unions, which seemed to be protecting the rights of the working class, in Gramscian theory in fact form part of the integral state, integrating workers through the establishment of consent for rule.

Generally the developments of labour politics of the 1950s, 60s and 70s can be said, from a Gramscian perspective, to be indicative of the inability of the dominant classes to absorb and accommodate demands formulated from below by a rising new working class, and therefore the inability of the dominant classes to serve as a coherent force by forging lasting alliances with subordinate classes, as they attempt to consolidate the rule of the modern capitalist state. The urban / rural division is clearly visible in the support base of the bourgeois parties – with the conservative centre-right parties catering mostly to the peasants and the generally smaller conservative employers of TISK, and the social democratic CHP, catering to the urban working classes and the bigger progressive employers of TÜSIAD. None of the leading parties were able to gain the support from both groups up until 1980.

Furthermore, most of the demands formulated by the working classes were of a nature functioning within the common sense framework of the integral state, as a consequence of the conservative or reformist character of labour unions. Why was this so? Why were the dominant classes unable to absorb demands, and why were the demands of the majority of the working class framed within common sense? As described above, the answer to these questions may be found in the U&CD of capitalism, which fostered the development of a strong bureaucratic class and a weak bourgeoisie. This stunted bourgeois development resulted in a weak bourgeoisie, wracked with internal divisions along temporal / spatial lines. Concomitantly, the early working classes gave consent to nationalist ideology, as they were confronted with the War of Independence. The Soviet support of the Kemalist élite likewise encouraged workers to support the Kemalists. Later on as primitive accumulation took hold in the East, the urban migrants, who were coming to the cities to find work in industry, arrived with a rural mentality, which split workers into groups along regional lines, preventing the emergence of a collective consciousness. This latter factor points to the fact that the relations of production undergirding the Turkish integral state of the period in question, namely the combined character of development, with feudal and primitive accumulation in the eastern regions and capitalist accumulation mainly in the West, led to a large part of the relations of the integral state being based on coercion rather than consent. The above factors led to a blocked dialectic of the old classes (trading bourgeoisie, landowners, and petty producers) and the new classes (the industrial bourgeoisie and workers). These factors were, within the Gramscian theoretical framework, a passive revolution of capital taking place within the U&CD of capitalism. In other words, the bureaucracy imported international modes of production in the face of an absence of bourgeois hegemony. The U&CD of the Turkish integral state was expressed in the rural and authoritarian mentality of the bulk of Turkish industrialists, which made them unable and unwilling to overcome the obstacle to the functional adequacy of the capitalist state posed by the formal adequacy of the new social state. This resulted in a serious crisis of legitimacy of the bourgeoisie in the 1970s.

The above-mentioned developments were part of the development of the capitalist type of state, where civil society and the economy become institutionally separated from the state apparatus. Such an institutionalization took place as laws were implemented that would encourage the emergence of a plethora of institutions, i.e. what is traditionally termed civil society. In itself such a decentralization of society can be perceived as an act of integration by the dominant classes in the sense that it is an accommodation of demands for greater political rights uttered by the subordinate classes, at the same time as continuing the exploitative accumulation of capitalism (Balkan and Savran 2002, p. 34). This institutional separation created barriers for the extraction of surplus of the industrialists, as a range of demands from below now had to be taken into consideration. The increasingly militant working classes, exercising their rights to bargain and strike, were met by similarly militancy from many employers, not inclined to negotiate. The methods employed by the industrialists, in order to overcome obstacles to short-term surplus extraction created by the formal adequacy of the state, were of a coercive character, as they attempted to force labour unions into submission through protracted lock-outs. The bourgeois party, the JP, followed suit, as it criticized newly gained rights. In this sense, it is a case in which form problematizes content, as the system set in place to facilitate non-political surplus extraction and non-coercive capital accumulation resulted in protracted conflict within the integral state, i.e. a situation where the elite groups are dominant instead of leading (Gramsci 1992, p. 136, Q1, §44, p. 41; second draft in Gramsci 1971, p. 57 and note 5, Q19, §24, p. 2010). Furthermore, in this blurring of the capitalist nature of the state “the shortcoming is that state (politics) and market (economics) are taken as ahistoric starting points of analysis” (Morton 2011, p. 170). This ahistoricity ignores the contingent relationship between the modern state and capitalist market forces. In the Gramscian perspective, then, the modern Turkish state is a product of the U&CD of capitalism that propels domestic elites to embark on a mimetic exercise, as they transform the state through the importation of capitalist relations of production, while the combined aspect of development results in a mix of consent and coercion, with emphasis on the latter, emblematic of the process of passive revolution.

Bibliography

Ahmad F. 1977, *The Turkish experiment in democracy, 1950-1975*, London, Westview Press, for the Royal Institute of International Affairs.

———. 2003, *Turkey, the Quest for Identity*, Oxford, Oneworld.

———. 2008, *From Empire to Republic: Essays on the Late Ottoman Empire and Modern Turkey*, İstanbul, İstanbul Bilgi University Press.

Allinson J. C., Anievas A. 2009, *The Uses and Misuses of Uneven and Combined Development: an Anatomy of a Concept*, “Cambridge Review of International Affairs”, 22, pp. 47-67.

———. 2010, *The Uneven and Combined Development of the Meiji Restoration: A Passive Revolutionary Road to Capitalist Modernity*, “Capital & Class”, 34, pp. 469-90.

Ayata S., Ayata A.-G. 2007, *The Center-Left Parties in Turkey*, “Turkish Studies”, 8, pp. 211-32.

Aydin Z. 1997, *The Role of the State in Turkish and South Korean Development Experiences*, “Turkish Public Administration Annual”, Vol. 22-23.

Aytekin E. A. 2013, *Tax Revolts During the Tanzimat Period (1839–1876) and Before the Young Turk Revolution (1904–1908): Popular Protest and State Formation in the Late Ottoman Empire*, “Journal of Policy History”, 25, pp. 308-33.

Bacik G., Dede A. Y. 2012, *A Convergence of Rival Ideologies: The Sociological and Organizational Structures of Anti-labour Politics in Turkey*, “Middle Eastern Studies”, 48 pp. 797-814.

Balkan N., Savran S. 2002, *The Politics of Permanent Crisis. Class, Ideology and State in Turkey*, New York, Nova Science Publishers.

Belge M. 2009, *Nationalism, Democracy and the Left in Turkey*, “Journal of Intercultural Studies”, 30, pp. 7-20.

Bianchi R. 1984, *Interest Groups and Political Development in Turkey*, Princeton, Princeton University Press.

Blind P. K. 2008, *Democratic Institutions of Undemocratic Individuals: Privatizations, Labor, and Democracy in Turkey and Argentina*, New York, Palgrave Macmillan US.

Boyrac C. 2012, “*Class and Nationalism in the Age of Global Capitalism: Post-1980 Privatization Process in Turkey*”, PhD thesis, İstanbul Bilgi University.

Bozdağlıoğlu Y. 2003, *Turkish Foreign Policy and Turkish Identity, a Constructivist Approach*, New York, Routledge.

Bromley S. 1994, *Rethinking Middle East Politics*, Austin, University of Texas Press.

Carnoy M. 1984, *The State and Political Theory*, Princeton, Princeton University Press.

Cizre-Sakallıoğlu Ü. 1992, *Labour and State in Turkey: 1960-80*, “Middle Eastern Studies”, 28, pp. 712-28.

Cleveland W. L. 2012, *A History of the Modern Middle East*, New York, Westview Press.

Demiralp S. 2015, *In Bourgeoisie we trust, but which one? Islamism, development, and the “finance curse”*, “Journal of Emerging Economies and Islamic Research”, 3 (1), pp.1-16.

Dereli T. 1968, *The Development of Turkish Trade Unionism: A Study of Legislative and Socio-political Dimensions*, İstanbul Üniversitesi, İktisat Fakültesi.

Doğan E. 2010, *Parliamentary Experience of the Turkish Labor Party, 1965-1969*, “Turkish Studies”, 11 (3), pp. 313-28.

Eligür B. 2010, *The Mobilization of Political Islam in Turkey*, Cambridge and New York, Cambridge University Press.

Giroux H. A. 1981, *Ideology, Culture and the Process of Schooling*, Philadelphia, Temple University Press.

Gramsci A. 1971, *Selections from the Prison Notebooks of Antonio Gramsci*, ed. and trans. Quintin Hoare and Geoffrey Nowell-Smith, London, Lawrence and Wishart.

———. 1975, *Quaderni del carcere*, ed. Valentino Gerratana, Torino, Einaudi.

———. 1992, *Prison Notebooks Vol. I*, ed. J.A. Buttigieg and trans. J. A. Buttigieg and A. Callari, New York, Columbia University Press.

———. 1996, *Prison Notebooks Vol. II*, ed. and trans. J.A. Buttigieg, New York, Columbia University Press.

———. 2007, *Prison Notebooks Vol. III*, ed. and trans. J.A. Buttigieg, New York, Columbia University Press.

Gülalp H. 1985, *Patterns of Capital Accumulation and State-Society Relations in Turkey*, "Journal of Contemporary Asia", 15, pp. 329-48.

Hagen J.M., Ruttan V.W. 1987, *Development Policy Under Eisenhower and Kennedy* (Economic Development Center, University of Minnesota), Bulletin 87-10.

Heper M., Sayari S. 2002, *Political Leaders and Democracy in Turkey*, Lanham, Lexington Books.

Heper M. 1976, *The Recalcitrance of the Turkish Public Bureaucracy to "Bourgeois Politics": A Multi-Factor Political Stratification Analysis*, "Middle East Journal", 30, pp. 485-500.

Jackson D. 1971, *The Political Economy of Collective Bargaining-The Case of Turkey*, "British Journal of Industrial Relations", 9, pp. 69-81.

Jacoby T. 2004, *Social Power and the Turkish State*, London and New York, Frank Cass.

———. 2006. *Agriculture, the State and Class Formation in Turkey's First Republic (1923–60)*, "Journal of Peasant Studies", 33, pp. 34-60.

Jessop B. 2008, *Dialogue of the Deaf: Some Reflections on the Poulantzas-Miliband Debate*, in Wetherly, Barrow and Burnham, 2008, *cit.*, pp. 132-57.

Kaya M. 2014, *Western Interventions and Formation of the Young Turks' Siege Mentality*, "Middle East Critique", 23, pp. 127-45.

Kayaoglu B. 2009, *Strategic Imperatives, Democratic Rhetoric: The United States and Turkey, 1945–52: Cold War in the Aegean*, "Cold War History", 9, pp. 321-45.

Keyder Ç. 1987, *State and Class in Turkey, a Study in Capitalist Development*, London, Verso.

Kus B., Ozel I. 2010, *United We Restrain, Divided We Rule: Neoliberal Reforms and Labor Unions in Turkey and Mexico*, "European Journal of Turkish Studies", 11 (special number on Turkey): <http://ejts.revues.org/4291>.

Leder A. 1979, *Party Competition in Rural Turkey: Agent of Change or Defender of Traditional Rule?*, "Middle Eastern Studies", 15, pp. 82-105.

Marx K., Engels F. 1992. Engels' *Preface to the 1893 Italian Edition of The Communist Manifesto*, Oxford, Oxford University Press.

Mello B. 2007, *Political Process and the Development of Labor Insurgency in Turkey, 1945–80*, "Social Movement Studies", 6, pp. 207-25.

Morton, A. D. 2011, *Revolution and State in Modern Mexico: The Political Economy of Uneven Development*, Lanham, Rowman & Littlefield.

———. 2013, *The Limits of Sociological Marxism?*, “Historical Materialism”, 21, pp. 129-58.

Nichols T., Sugur N., Demir E. 2002, *Beyond Cheap Labour: Trade Unions and Development in the Turkish Metal Industry*, “The Sociological Review”, 50, pp. 23-47.

Nisancioglu K. 2013, *The Ottoman Origins of Capitalism: Uneven and Combined Development and Eurocentrism*, “Review of International Studies”, 40, pp. 325-47.

Quataert D., Zurcher, E.J. 1995, *Workers and Working Class in the Ottoman Empire and the Turkish Republic 1839-19*, London, I. B. Tauris.

Ramsaur E.E. 1957, *The Young Turks: Prelude to the Revolution of 1908*, Princeton, Princeton University Press.

Roberts D. D. 2011, *Reconsidering Gramsci's interpretation of fascism*, “Journal of Modern Italian Studies”, 16, pp. 239-55.

Robinson R. 1951, *The Lesson of Turkey*, “Middle East Journal”, 5, pp. 424.

Saad-Filho A., Johnston D. 2005, *Neoliberalism A Critical Reader*, London, Pluto Press.

Samim A. 1981, *The Tragedy of the Turkish Left*, “New Left Review”, I/126, pp. 60-85.

Scipes K. 2011, *AFL-CIO's Secret War against Developing Country Workers: Solidarity or Sabotage?*, Lanham, Lexington Books.

Showstack Sassoon A. 1980, *Gramsci's Politics*, London, Croom Helm.

Szyliowicz J. S. 1966, *Political Participation and Modernization in Turkey*, “The Western Political Quarterly”, 19, pp. 266-84.

Taglia S. 2015, *Intellectuals and Reform in the Ottoman Empire: The Young Turks on the Challenges of Modernity*, London, Routledge.

Trotsky, L. D. 2008, *History of the Russian Revolution*, Chicago, Haymarket Books.

Tuna O. 1964. *Trade Unions in Turkey*, “International Labour Review”, 90, pp. 413-31.

Weiker W. F. 1973, *Political Tutelage and Democracy in Turkey, the Free Party and its Aftermath*, Leiden, Brill.

Wetherly P., Barrow C. W., Burnham P. 2008, *Class, Power and the State in Capitalist Society: Essays on Ralph Miliband*, Basingstoke and New York, Palgrave Macmillan.

White P. J. 1998, *Economic marginalization of Turkey's Kurds: the failed promise of modernization and reform*, "Journal of Muslim Minority Affairs", 18, pp. 139-58.

Öncü A. 2003, *Dictatorship Plus Hegemony: A Gramscian Analysis of the Turkish State*, "Science & Society", 67, pp. 303-28.

Özbudun E., Ulusan A. 1980, *The Political Economy of Income Distribution in Turkey*, New York, Holmes & Meier.



UNIVERSITY
OF WOLLONGONG
AUSTRALIA

2018

Scritti (1910-1926). Vol. 2, Scritti 1917, a cura di Leonardo Rapone (in italiano)

Giovanna Savant

Follow this and additional works at: <http://ro.uow.edu.au/gramsci>

Recommended Citation

Savant, Giovanna, Scritti (1910-1926). Vol. 2, Scritti 1917, a cura di Leonardo Rapone (in italiano),
International Gramsci Journal, 2(4), 2018, 83-115.

Available at: <http://ro.uow.edu.au/gramsci/vol2/iss4/6>

Scritti (1910-1926). Vol. 2, Scritti 1917, a cura di Leonardo Rapone (in italiano)

Abstract

In this editorial presentation of Giovanna Savant's review article and her detailed reconstruction of the historical context to Gramsci's journalistic output in 1917, notes to page numbers where not otherwise specified are to the volume of the National Edition edited by Leonardo Rapone. Cross references are included to aid readers in finding articles included in the earlier publications of Gramsci's pre-prison writings; the English-language version of her article also includes references to standard English translations, where available. It should be borne in mind that Gramsci's various newspaper articles were at times heavily censored and a great merit of Rapone's volume, apart from its more authoritative attribution of authorship, is to have often found the censored passages in archives or outlying areas where the censorship was less rigid and reinstated them. Readers should therefore realize that words quoted in the text of Savant's contribution are not always to be found in the standard Italian collections of Gramsci's writings, but sometimes only in the volume which she here discusses.

Keywords

Journalism 1917; new attributions; situation in Turin; nationalism; critique of socialists; Russian revolutions

Antonio Gramsci ***Scritti (1910-1926). Vol. 2. 1917****

Giovanna Savant

1. Nell'ambito dell'*Edizione Nazionale* degli scritti gramsciani, il volume curato da Leonardo Rapone è il primo dedicato all'attività di giornalista svolta dal pensatore sardo negli anni precedenti all'arresto. Gramsci comincia a scrivere stabilmente per la stampa socialista nell'ottobre del 1915, collaborando al «Grido del Popolo» di Torino e, dal dicembre dello stesso anno, alle *Cronache torinesi*, la pagina che l'edizione milanese dell'«Avanti!» riserva quotidianamente al capoluogo piemontese, occupandosi in particolare della rubrica «Sotto la mole» e di gran parte delle recensioni teatrali¹.

Il volume comprende tutti gli articoli gramsciani del 1917, inclusi quelli cancellati dalla censura sul «Grido del Popolo», ma di cui si sono conservate le bozze di stampa all'Archivio di Stato di Torino, dove le rinvenne per la prima volta Sergio Caprioglio, agli inizi degli anni Ottanta, curando per l'Einaudi l'ultima raccolta di scritti precarcerari antecedente all'*Edizione Nazionale*. La maggior parte di tali articoli non è firmata, come previsto da una norma introdotta dalla Direzione del PSI nell'autunno del 1914, secondo la quale un giornale proletario non doveva servire da vetrina a nessuno², per cui il problema principale che Rapone ha dovuto affrontare è stato quello di individuare, col maggior grado di certezza possibile, i testi effettivamente attribuibili a Gramsci.

Punto di partenza di tale lavoro è stata un'analisi critica delle precedenti edizioni degli scritti giornalistici, analisi che ha condotto a escludere un gruppo di 22 articoli che fino ad oggi si era ritenuto fossero usciti dalla penna del pensatore sardo. L'esclusione è motivata

* A cura di L. Rapone con la collaborazione di Maria Luisa Righi e il contributo di Benedetta Garzarelli, Roma, Istituto della Enciclopedia Italiana, 2015.

¹ Si veda: M. L. Righi, *Gli esordi di Gramsci al «Grido del Popolo» e all'«Avanti!» (1915-1916)*, «Studi Storici», LV (2014), n. 3, pp. 727-57.

² Cfr. G. M. Serrati, *Per un cassetto personale*, «Avanti!», 13 settembre 1916 e A. G., *Un giornale in liquidazione. Un partito alla deriva. Intermezzo semiserio*, «l'Unità», 16 settembre 1925, in A. Gramsci, *La costruzione del Partito comunista. 1923-1926*, Torino, Einaudi, 1971, pp. 405-9.

dal fatto che tali testi o sono eccessivamente mutilati dalla censura e non è quindi possibile stabilirne con certezza la paternità o presentano difformità stilistiche rispetto agli articoli sicuramente riconducibili a Gramsci. Per le stesse ragioni, non sono compresi i pochi scritti del 1917 di incerta attribuzione che Caprioglio aveva invece incluso nel volume *La Città futura*³. A fronte di tali esclusioni, il libro raccoglie 25 nuovi articoli che Rapone, in base a una serie di motivazioni illustrate nella *Nota al testo*, attribuisce per la prima volta a Gramsci e tra i quali spiccano cinque recensioni di argomento musicale (opere liriche e concerti per pianoforte) che attestano l'interesse del pensatore sardo verso tale forma di espressione artistica⁴.

I testi sono ordinati in base alla data di pubblicazione, senza separare le cronache teatrali dagli altri scritti, perché come osserva giustamente il curatore, il pensiero di Gramsci nel 1917 e in generale negli anni della Grande guerra, è in formazione e lo si comprende meglio «solo abbracciandolo in una visione di insieme e seguendolo, passo dopo passo, in tutte le sue espressioni»⁵.

Dalla lettura dei quasi 300 articoli raccolti nel volume, si ricava l'immagine di un giornalista militante che, a differenza della maggior parte dei suoi colleghi, non cerca di rassicurare i lettori con i soliti *clichés* della propaganda spicciola, ma tenta di spingerli alla riflessione, seguendo un istinto educativo che caratterizzerà tutta la sua attività politica. Ne è un esempio «La Città futura», il numero unico di propaganda voluto dalla Federazione giovanile piemontese, uscito l'11 febbraio 1917 e interamente preparato da Gramsci. I lettori cui si rivolge sono principalmente i giovani che frequentano le scuole serali, i quali, secondo il polemista sardo, possono essere avvicinati al socialismo se comprendono che nel movimento giovanile vi è il mezzo

³ A. Gramsci, *La Città futura. 1917-1918*, a cura di S. Caprioglio, Torino, Einaudi, 1982.

⁴ Cfr. Rapone, *Nota al testo*, pp. XXIX-XXX. Nelle note di ogni articolo di critica teatrale, il curatore riporta il giudizio espresso dagli altri giornali torinesi in merito alla stessa rappresentazione, mettendo così in evidenza, in molti casi, l'originalità della posizione di Gramsci.

⁵ Ibidem, p. XXXI. Il volume è corredato da tre apparati: le *Voci biografiche*, che raccolgono notizie sulle persone citate negli articoli gramsciani, escluse le figure storiche più note, mentre sono inclusi tutti i contemporanei del pensatore sardo; l'*Indice dei periodici*, che comprende tutte le testate citate negli articoli di Gramsci, e l'*Indice dei nomi*.

di elevare la propria preparazione culturale⁶. Tuttavia, proprio il tono alto che caratterizza gli articoli fa sì che il numero unico abbia un'accoglienza contrastata all'interno dell'organizzazione giovanile e si attiri la critica di essere comprensibile a una ristretta *élite* di militanti⁷.

Nel complesso, «La Città futura» costituisce una sintesi efficace e nitida dei vari elementi che costituiscono il pensiero politico gramsciano dopo oltre tre anni dalla sua iscrizione al PSI: un marxismo rivoluzionario e antidogmatico, la critica al riformismo socialista e l'importanza della cultura per lo sviluppo della coscienza di classe nel proletariato⁸. Il numero unico rivela anche la varietà di interessi che caratterizzano la formazione intellettuale del giovane sardo: oltre a un nucleo di articoli e trafiletti scritti di suo pugno, sono inseriti un brano di Gaetano Salvemini sulla cultura e due riflessioni sulla religione e sul senso della vita, rispettivamente di Benedetto Croce, definito «il più grande pensatore d'Europa in questo momento» e di Armando Carlini, filosofo gentiliano⁹. Come ricorderà anni dopo, in una nota del carcere, all'epoca «egli era tendenzialmente piuttosto crociano» e il suo proposito era di utilizzare la filosofia neoidealista quale mezzo per una ripresa del marxismo tra i giovani, come l'hegelismo era stato la premessa del materialismo storico nell'Ottocento¹⁰.

Nell'annunciare l'uscita del foglio, Gramsci dichiara che la guerra «ha falciato i giovani», abbattendosi sul loro movimento come una scure, senza riuscire a soffocarlo però, perché i socialisti strappati alla vita sono stati sostituiti da altri, prima estranei alla lotta politica. Il conflitto «ha scosso come una ventata gli indifferenti», obbligandoli a

⁶ Cfr. Il Comitato regionale della Federazione Giovanile Piemontese, *Concludendo una discussione utile*, «L'Avanguardia», XI, n. 485, 1° aprile 1917, pp. 209-10.

⁷ Cfr. N. Cilla, *Nella nostra famiglia. Discussioni utili*, ivi, nn. 481-82, 4-11 marzo 1917.

⁸ Cfr. L. Paggi, *Gramsci e il moderno principe*. I. *Nella crisi del socialismo italiano*, Roma, Editori Riuniti, 2 voll., pp. 8-9, dove afferma che il numero unico assume il carattere «di una sorta di opera giovanile».

⁹ *Due inviti alla meditazione*, «La Città futura», 11 febbraio 1917, pp. 101-3. Rimando alle note di pp. 101-2 per la descrizione dei brani di Salvemini, Croce e Carlini e per i relativi riferimenti bibliografici.

¹⁰ A. Gramsci, *Quaderni del carcere*, a cura di V. Gerratana, Torino, Einaudi, 1975, Q10I, §11, p. 1233.

compiere il loro dovere¹¹. La condanna dell'indifferenza è tra i temi principali della «Città futura»:

L'indifferenza opera potentemente nella storia. Opera passivamente, ma opera. È la fatalità; è ciò su cui non si può contare; è ciò che sconvolge i programmi, che rovescia i piani meglio costrutti; è la materia brutta che si ribella all'intelligenza e la strozza. Ciò che succede, il male che si abbatte su tutti, il possibile bene che un atto eroico (di valore universale) può generare, non è tanto dovuto all'iniziativa dei pochi che operano, quanto all'indifferenza, all'assenteismo dei molti.

Quel che accade nella storia, avviene perché le masse lasciano fare, permettendo alla volontà di piccoli gruppi attivi di imporsi, segnando così i destini di una intera epoca. Secondo Gramsci, occorre sostituire simili atteggiamenti con una sensibilità nuova, che faccia sentire a ognuno il senso della propria responsabilità storica, «che non ammette agnosticismi e indifferenze di nessun genere»¹².

Ripudiare la passività, però, non basta: per essere veramente socialisti è necessario compiere una operazione ulteriore, ovvero eliminare ogni forma di sentimentalismo come movente per l'azione. Gramsci ha modo di spiegarlo qualche giorno dopo l'uscita della «Città futura», quando a Torino giungono in visita due rappresentanti del governo belga, l'operaio socialista Alphonse Gaspar e il deputato Vincent Volckaert. Come è accaduto in altre città della penisola, i due riferiscono alla stampa delle devastazioni subite nel loro paese in seguito all'invasione tedesca, affermando di non comprendere perché i dirigenti del movimento operaio italiano non abbiano risposto all'appello del popolo belga¹³. Già un anno prima, il militante sardo aveva scritto che i socialisti non possono «non sentir strazio per il piccolo Belgio schiantato», ma è uno strazio «austero», che non li induce a sciogliersi negli abbracciamenti generali¹⁴. Sulla base di tale convinzione, l'errore

¹¹ «La Città futura», «Il Grido del Popolo», XXII, n. 655, 11 febbraio 1917 e «Avanti!», 12 febbraio 1917, pp. 80-83.

¹² *Indifferenti*, «La Città futura», 11 febbraio 1917, pp. 93-94.

¹³ Si veda, ad esempio: *Gaspar narra le sofferenze del popolo belga, suscitando una manifestazione di commossa solidarietà*, «Gazzetta del Popolo», 26 febbraio 1917.

¹⁴ *La commemorazione di Miss Cavell*, «Avanti!», 17 gennaio 1916; in A. Gramsci, *Cronache torinesi. 1913-1917*, a cura di S. Caprioglio, Torino, Einaudi, 1980, pp. 76-79.

che imputa ai due inviati del governo belga è di cercare di trasformare il turbamento in un'arma politica, per cui rimangono nel giusto i socialisti italiani che rifiutano di prestarsi al gioco: il loro ambito naturale è la lotta di classe e, da tale punto di vista, non vi è nulla che possano fare per il Belgio¹⁵.

Gramsci insiste sul tema del carattere per sottolineare la differenza che intercorre tra i socialisti e i partiti borghesi: questi ultimi sono formati da uomini che, subito dopo l'Unità, hanno abbandonato le idee mazziniane e radicali di cui erano imbevuti a favore dell'ordine:

Si sono convertiti per sentimentalismo o per spirito di adattamento. Il sentimentalismo è diventato così il principio politico costruttivo della vita pubblica italiana. Il sentimentalismo che distrugge il carattere, che impedisce la formazione del carattere. Che alla logica sostituisce la confusione, al distinto, l'indistinto e il caotico. Che nega ogni programma concreto, perché è disposto a modificarsi a seconda delle contingenze che il caso crea¹⁶.

Gli avversari del movimento operaio, avendo una mentalità che «si è formata attraverso il trasformismo», vivono alla giornata, e sono «idolatri del fatto singolo, isolato» che diventa l'unico criterio di giudizio, mentre i socialisti nella storia vedono soprattutto la continuità, il dinamismo¹⁷. Per questo motivo, i militanti del PSI diventano esponenti di un nuovo tipo di umanità che, rinnegando l'impulso del buon cuore e il sentimentalismo, considerate «forme inferiori della vita spirituale», non cade più nelle facili illusioni. Uno dei meriti principali del socialismo italiano, quindi, è l'aver dato al paese ciò che è sempre mancato: un esempio concreto «di carattere adamantino e fieramente superbo di se stesso»¹⁸.

Il rigetto del buon cuore indica la presa di distanza di Gramsci dalla convinzione, diffusa tra gli intransigenti della sezione torinese, che il sentimento sia il movente principale dell'adesione al movimento ope-

¹⁵ Cfr. *I monaci di Pascal*, «Avanti!», 26 febbraio 1917, pp. 136-40.

¹⁶ Alfa Gamma, *Carattere*, «Il Grido del Popolo», XXII, n. 658, 3 marzo 1917, pp. 150-3.

¹⁷ *Il bozzacchione*, «Avanti!», 4 giugno 1917, pp. 310-12.

¹⁸ Alfa Gamma, *Carattere* cit.

raio¹⁹. Ma rivela anche l'influenza esercitata sul pensiero del rivoluzionario sardo da alcune riviste di cultura come «Leonardo» e «La Voce» di cui era attento lettore e che, sin dai primi anni del Novecento, si battevano per una rigenerazione morale del paese, da attuarsi attraverso lo sviluppo di certe qualità del carattere degli italiani. La differenza principale tra Gramsci e tali avanguardie è che, mentre la maggior parte degli intellettuali che le compongono aderisce alla causa dell'Intesa, considerando la Grande Guerra come lo strumento principale della necessaria riforma spirituale, il giovane polemista, al contrario, esalta l'opposizione al conflitto quale elemento fondante del nuovo tipo umano²⁰.

Secondo Gramsci, uno dei maggiori contributi all'infacchiamento del carattere degli italiani proviene dalla religione: già nel 1916, osserva come essa incentivi gli individui all'abdicazione della propria volontà nelle mani di Dio e dei suoi ministri sulla terra, iniziando a «manipolarli» sin dall'infanzia, nelle scuole e negli oratori²¹. Sono argomenti che riprende nel 1917, aggiungendo che a causa dell'educazione religiosa, fautrice di una mentalità dogmatica e intollerante, manca nel popolo italiano l'amore per la libera discussione e il desiderio di cercare la verità «con mezzi unicamente umani»²². Perfino l'associazione scoutistica italiana è sorta con un carattere spiccatamente confessionale: mentre in Inghilterra ha il fine educativo di sviluppare nei fanciulli il senso della responsabilità personale, «per abituare i singoli a guidarsi da sé nelle difficoltà dell'azione», in Italia, è diventata una «palestra di funzioni religiose», da cui escono interi «battaglioni di sanfedisti gretti e intolleranti»²³.

All'interno della vasta organizzazione ecclesiastica, Gramsci individua nei gesuiti coloro che contribuiscono in misura maggiore

¹⁹ Amedeo Bordiga aveva espresso la convinzione che fosse sufficiente il sentimento per aderire al socialismo sin dal congresso giovanile di Bologna del 1912. Cfr. G. Savant, *Bordiga, Gramsci e la Grande Guerra (1914-1920)*, Napoli, La Città del Sole, 2016, pp. 35-6.

²⁰ Cfr. L. Rapone, *Cinque anni che paiono secoli. Antonio Gramsci dal socialismo al comunismo (1914-1919)*, Roma, Carocci, 2011, p. 108 e pp. 109-29, per una ricostruzione del dibattito sul carattere degli italiani dall'Unità fino alla Grande Guerra.

²¹ *L'appello ai pargoli*, «Avanti!», 31 luglio 1916; in A. Gramsci, *Cronache torinesi* cit., pp. 459-60.

²² *Per un'Associazione di cultura*, ivi, 18 dicembre 1917, pp. 660-2.

²³ *Bilancio*, ivi, 4 settembre 1917, pp. 448-9.

all'opera di «distruzione dei caratteri»: dotati di una eccellente organizzazione e di una forte disciplina, li paragona alla grande industria, mentre i parroci, al loro confronto, sono dei semplici artigiani. La Compagnia di Gesù rappresenta «una forma di massoneria clericale», incline ad agire nell'ombra, potente e strutturata come la massoneria tradizionale. Gramsci considera tali associazioni fondamentalmente simili: entrambe utilizzano come arma di propaganda «l'inganno, il trucco incontrollabile, insindacabile da parte della pubblica opinione» e pertanto vanno avversate dai socialisti²⁴.

Lungo tutto il 1917, segue i tentativi dei gesuiti di insediarsi nuovamente a Torino, dove cercano di sottrarre al clero secolare la Chiesa dei SS. Martiri e invoca l'applicazione della legge Pinelli, che vieta loro di fissare la propria residenza in Italia. I socialisti non devono mai stancarsi di lottare contro la mentalità massonica e gesuitica, ma più in generale, devono cercare di sostituire nelle coscienze al Dio trascendentale dei cattolici la fiducia nell'uomo e nelle sue energie migliori come unica realtà spirituale²⁵.

Tale proposito è alla base dell'aspra polemica che, nella primavera del 1917, coinvolge Gramsci contro il «Momento», quotidiano cattolico torinese, in occasione della proclamazione a beato del cuneese Giuseppe Benedetto Cottolengo. Basandosi sul libro di un sacerdote salesiano, il giovane sardo accusa le gerarchie ecclesiastiche di aver costantemente cercato di ostacolare le diverse attività del santo a favore dei poveri, di modo che la beatificazione diviene una volgare speculazione volta a sfruttarne l'opera e la popolarità per i propri «fini di setta»²⁶. Il Cottolengo è considerato un uomo giusto, che avrebbe compiuto la stessa opera benefica anche se fosse stato buddista o musulmano, poiché traeva la forza morale necessaria «da ben altra fonte che non la mitologia cristiana». Come cattolico avrebbe dovuto sottomettersi agli ordini dei suoi superiori, ma era «un uomo di carattere, più che un uomo di fede» e pertanto disubbidì²⁷. La

²⁴ *La rinascita gesuitica*, ivi, 15 gennaio 1917, pp. 29-33.

²⁵ *Ibidem*.

²⁶ *Il Cottolengo e i clericali*, «Avanti!», 30 aprile 1917, pp. 260-61.

²⁷ *Il Cottolengo e i clericali*, ivi, 5 maggio 1917, pp. 264-68.

dimostrazione che l'agire etico non ha come presupposto necessario una fede trascendente assume una grande importanza per Gramsci, perché prova la possibilità stessa del socialismo:

Il problema dell'iniziativa sociale è il massimo problema del socialismo. La nostra critica tende a provare che si avrà produzione anche senza lo stimolo della proprietà privata, del privilegio, anche senza il miraggio di una raggiungibile sopraffazione individuale. Ed è sempre lo stesso problema. Neghiamo, contro i conservatori, la necessità del privilegio economico per la produzione della ricchezza, come neghiamo contro i cattolici, la necessità della religione per la produzione del bene, della verità, della vita morale²⁸.

La religione non è l'unica forza a guastare il carattere degli individui. Gramsci ritiene che molti difetti inerenti ai costumi degli italiani derivino dal fatto che nel paese, pur essendovi nati «dei luminari della scienza, della politica, della vita morale e della cultura», non si sia mai formato intorno ad essi un gruppo anche esiguo di allievi che ne attuassero gli insegnamenti e i principi. Riprendendo i versi di una poesia di Giuseppe Giusti, afferma che «ogni Machiavelli» è sempre stato circondato «da una caterva di Stenterelli», ovvero da individui mediocri che «urlano e sbraitano», esaltando le virtù degli italiani, ma che non lavorano e non producono né idee, né fatti, perché non sanno «adattarsi al lavoro modesto, ma fecondo della collettività anonima»²⁹.

La guerra ha favorito la diffusione degli Stenterelli, categoria in cui Gramsci include gli intellettuali interventisti, la maggior parte dei quali tenta di operare una trasposizione del conflitto dal piano politico-militare a quello spirituale, esaltando la superiorità dei popoli latini su quelli germanici e rappresentando la conflagrazione in corso come uno scontro tra la civiltà e la barbarie. Alle loro chiacchiere vuote contro la cultura e la scienza tedesca, il giovane rivoluzionario contrappone un costume fatto di serietà e di lavoro, «che temprava gli individui e ne fa scaturire alla luce del sole la genuina personalità»³⁰.

²⁸ *Rispondiamo a Crispolti*, ivi, 19 giugno 1917, pp. 337-39.

²⁹ *Stenterello*, ivi, 10 marzo 1917, pp. 171-74. La poesia del Giusti è *Il Memento*.

³⁰ *Demagogia artistica*, ivi, 15 gennaio 1917, pp. 34-37.

Le critiche di Gramsci si riferiscono in particolare ai membri della Lega d'azione antitedesca, nata a Torino nel giugno del 1916, subito dopo la *Strafexpedition*, col compito di svolgere una funzione di polizia civile contro i nemici esterni (spie, infiltrati, ma più in generale tutti i cittadini tedeschi) e interni (i pacifisti e in particolare i socialisti) oggetto di continui e virulenti attacchi. Il suo scopo dichiarato, nelle parole del presidente, il professor Pietro Romano, è di opporsi «alla dannosa penetrazione tedesca», in ogni settore della vita pubblica, per raggiungere l'emancipazione completa «da ogni egemonia teutonica»³¹.

Gli aderenti alla Lega, tra i quali figurano diversi docenti dell'ateneo torinese, hanno una concezione della nazione basata sullo *jus sanguinis*: si è titolari di diritti, solo in quanto si hanno radici ben piantate nel suolo, ma anche nel sangue del paese, con uno slittamento pericoloso verso una concezione dell'appartenenza nazionale se non razzista, quanto meno esclusivista. È un aspetto che non sfugge a Gramsci e, quando nel marzo del 1917 la Lega pubblica un numero unico, «La Riscossa italica», rileva una curiosa incongruenza: l'aggettivo italico ha un valore «essenzialmente di razza», con un significato diverso da italiano. Italici erano i romani, gli osci, gli umbri, ma non i celti e nemmeno gli ebrei: molti iscritti alla Lega sono invece semiti ed esaltando le virtù della stirpe italica, cadono nel ridicolo, perché se l'Italia fosse ancora soltanto italica, ovvero se fosse sotto la dominazione romana, essi sarebbero schiavi privi di diritti³².

Tra gli autori del numero unico della Lega figura un insegnante di ginnasio, Arnaldo Monti, che nell'estate del 1917 crea a sua volta un Fascio studentesco per la guerra e per l'idea nazionale, autorizzando in pratica gli studenti delle scuole medie a ribellarsi nei confronti dei loro docenti se sospetti di tedescofilia. Gramsci denuncia che in tal modo la vita scolastica sarà ridotta a un continuo sopruso, con l'istituzione di una vera e propria tirannia dei peggiori elementi, i quali potranno giustificare la loro pigrizia con la malvagità dei libri di testo. La scuola

³¹ P. Romano, *Note sull'interventismo torinese e il ventennale della vittoria (1914-1918)*, Associazione torinese P. Micca, Torino, 1939, pp. 3-4.

³² *Stenterello risponde*, «Avanti!», 14 marzo 1917, pp. 183-84.

italiana sarà «stenterellizzata», cessando di essere una collaborazione intelligente fra giovani e uomini³³.

Non sfugge al militante sardo, come dietro alla pretesa della Lega di rappresentare «la più genuina tradizione italiana», si celi sovente un interesse economico:

[...] l'antitedeschismo di questi Stenterelli ha dei caratteri particolari, delle tendenze particolari che badano al solido più di quanto non faccia sembrare la loro qualità di poeti acchiappa nuvole: ottenere dei provvedimenti economici che permettano ai commercianti di tutte le qualità una congrua ricompensa protezionistica alle colascionate d'occasione con cui fingono di partecipare al tributo di sangue che i soldati proletari sono costretti a dare alla patria³⁴.

Per ottenere un simile scopo, è necessario imprimere negli italiani la convinzione che i tedeschi siano un popolo di individui abbietti, che meritano di essere messi al bando dall'umanità, rinchiusi «entro una barriera di fuoco e di tariffe doganali perché finiscano con lo sbranarsi a vicenda». Denunciare tale macchinazione diventa «una questione morale»³⁵. Infatti, secondo Gramsci, ciò che «gli impinzatori di cervelli» omettono di dire è che l'Italia è un paese povero, dove i consumatori hanno scarsa capacità d'acquisto, ma per le necessità della vita moderna devono comunque comprare. Dunque, è utile che esistano nazioni come la Germania, specializzate nella produzione di merce povera: lo scambio commerciale è conveniente sia per gli italiani sia per i tedeschi, perché in economia, il bene e il male sono «l'utile e la perdita» e si tratta di «concetti economici, non sentimentali»³⁶.

Ritorna nuovamente, nella polemica contro la Lega, la questione del carattere e la condanna del sentimentalismo come movente per l'azione: gli interventisti introducono nelle questioni economiche degli elementi di natura sentimentale che generano turbamento, portando gli individui a «quel grado di frenesia nazionalistica e di confusione

³³ *La scuola di Stenterello*, ivi, 15 giugno 1917, pp. 330-34. Nuova attribuzione.

³⁴ *Stenterello frigna*, ivi, 20 marzo 1917, pp. 189-91.

³⁵ *Spezzatino d'asino e contorno*, ivi, 24 aprile 1917, pp. 248-50.

³⁶ Argiropulo, *Il perfido straniero*, «Il Grido del popolo», XXII, n. 672, 9 giugno 1917, pp. 321-23.

mentale che è necessaria per l'autoasservimento»³⁷. Perfino il turismo viene considerato una vergogna: gli italiani dovrebbero sentirsi mortificati perché ogni anno numerosi stranieri vengono ad ammirare le bellezze naturali e artistiche del paese, lasciandovi i loro quattrini «come a titolo d'elemosina». Ma la verità è che si tratta di una forma di esportazione a rovescio: anziché acquistare nel proprio paese le merci italiane, gli stranieri vengono direttamente in Italia a consumarle. La vergogna, al limite, consiste nel modo servile con cui i forestieri vengono trattati: ma tale servilismo «non è un fatto economico, è un fatto morale» e può essere superato insegnando agli italiani che sono necessari agli stranieri e viceversa «e che di questo essere reciprocamente necessari è formata la dignità di ciascuno»³⁸.

Mentre gli interventisti sono liberi di organizzare conferenze in pubblico, i socialisti possono trovarsi solo in riunioni private, con un ristretto numero di uditori, sovente interrotte «dal questurino», diventato «giudice supremo» della vita pubblica italiana e le cui angherie Gramsci non si stanca di denunciare lungo tutto il periodo bellico³⁹. Se le forze dell'ordine impediscono la libertà di movimento e la censura colpisce quella di pensiero, ciò non significa che il movimento operaio non continui a svilupparsi, come sperano gli avversari di classe: al contrario, gli avvenimenti che non lasciano di sé testimonianze dirette, «hanno la migliore delle testimonianze quando sfociano clamorosamente in un effetto supremo, e si realizzano in esso»⁴⁰.

La retorica patriottica non risparmia neppure il teatro: in veste di critico dell'«Avanti!», Gramsci segue vari drammi in cui il conflitto mondiale diventa lo strumento della redenzione morale dei personaggi, che nelle trincee insanguinate imparano finalmente cosa sia il coraggio e l'altruismo. In realtà:

La guerra, moralmente, non fa diventare né generosi, né ribaldi, perché può far diventare l'uno e l'altro, e non è ancor detto quali siano in maggioranza questi prodotti, non della guerra, ma delle riflessioni, dei giudizi, delle esasperazioni, degli

³⁷ Ibidem.

³⁸ *L'industria del forestiero*, «Il Grido del popolo», XXII, n. 675, 29 giugno 1917, pp. 353-54.

³⁹ «Umanitari», «Avanti!», 27 marzo 1917, pp. 203-4.

⁴⁰ *La maschera e il volto*, ivi, 14 gennaio 1917, pp. 27-28.

entusiasmi che la guerra ha servito a rinsaldare o a liquefare a seconda degli uomini, della loro preparazione morale, della loro preparazione umana⁴¹.

Si moltiplicano inoltre a Torino gli spettacoli di varietà volti a procurare agli spettatori un mero divertimento volgare, a scapito di opere più serie ed elaborate «utili per l'educazione estetica» del pubblico. Gramsci ritiene che tale fenomeno sia riconducibile alla formazione del trust dei fratelli Chiarella, interessati unicamente a ottenere incassi sicuri nei numerosi teatri da loro controllati⁴². Così succede che dove si propinano «le più volgari sconcezze», il pubblico abbondi, mentre il concerto di una brava pianista polacca, Helena Morsztyn [Morsztynowna], che esegue brani di Beethoven e Chopin, riuscendo a tradurre «la bellezza, la possanza e il dolore» delle loro opere, sia disertato. Gramsci è convinto che mentre i borghesi snobbano i due grandi compositori perché la loro musica è come «una bufera che travolge e sconvolge ogni bassezza d'animo», i proletari, se potessero spendere per un concerto, saprebbero apprezzarli e seguirebbero «con fede e con passione» una brava interprete come la Morsztyn⁴³.

2. Nel 1917, Gramsci continua a utilizzare la rubrica «Sotto la mole» per analizzare i cambiamenti che la guerra produce nella vita economica, sociale e morale del paese, filtrandoli attraverso la lente torinese. Molti dei suoi articoli, non di rado venati di un feroce sarcasmo, sono rivolti contro gli esponenti della maggioranza liberale che dirige il Comune, guidata dal sindaco Teofilo Rossi, industriale del vermouth, rivelatasi sovente insensibile ai disagi sofferti dalla popolazione lavoratrice a causa del conflitto, già nei due anni precedenti.

Uno dei suoi bersagli preferiti è l'assessore alle Finanze Costanzo Rinaudo, il quale dovrebbe vigilare affinché la ricca borghesia torinese versi nelle casse municipali la tassa di famiglia introdotta nel novembre 1915, per far fronte alle accresciute spese del Comune dopo l'inter-

⁴¹ «L'elevazione» di E. Bernstein all'*Alfieri*, ivi, 28 novembre 1917, pp. 609-10.

⁴² *L'industria teatrale*, ivi, 28 giugno 1917, pp. 348-50.

⁴³ *Helena Morsztyn*, ivi, 7 marzo 1917, pp. 161-4. Nuova attribuzione.

vento italiano⁴⁴. Gramsci si documenta sull'importo versato dallo stesso Rinaudo e rimane sorpreso dall'esiguità della cifra, considerato che percepisce diversi redditi; ritiene quindi fondato il sospetto che «il magistrato che dovrebbe essere il tutore del patrimonio comunale, ne sia in realtà il primo svaligiatore». Ne deriva la non lieve conseguenza che, violando la legge, l'assessore è costretto a permettere che anche gli altri non la rispettino. Gramsci accusa la borghesia torinese di non avere la coscienza dei propri doveri: le somme che annualmente sottrae all'erario vengono recuperate facendole pagare agli «umili» che così «devono spremere le loro vene, e rinunciare al necessario»⁴⁵.

Inoltre, a dispetto degli interessi superiori e dell'eccezionalità della situazione, richiamati con retorica insistenza, la Giunta non brilla per rapidità di intervento nelle questioni annonarie, timorosa di urtare gli interessi degli esercenti, il cui voto è stato determinante nel sancire la vittoria elettorale del giugno 1914. Senza dubbio, il Comune si trova a operare in un contesto difficile, contrassegnato da un rapido aumento della popolazione, dovuto all'arrivo di immigrati impiegati nelle industrie mobilitate, nonché dalla presenza di profughi, feriti e militari in transito; il risultato è che la domanda dei beni di prima necessità supera l'offerta e si crea un forte rialzo dei prezzi, ma la Giunta Rossi si rifiuta a lungo di regolamentare il mercato, introducendo i calmieri sui generi alimentari soltanto alla fine del 1916⁴⁶.

Gramsci osserva che la loro efficacia è comunque modesta, dal momento che la maggior parte dei commercianti tenta in ogni modo di eluderli e osserva il ripetersi di casi in cui, donne proletarie recatesi dai carabinieri per denunciare dei negozianti che si rifiutavano di vendere loro un bene calmierato, se non avessero acquistato contemporaneamente anche qualche altra cosa, vengono brutalmente messe alla porta e la loro protesta è ignorata⁴⁷.

⁴⁴ Si veda: ASCT (Archivio Storico del Comune di Torino), *Atti Municipali*, seduta del 26 novembre 1915.

⁴⁵ *Per un omaggio al prof. Costanzo Rinaudo*, «Avanti!», 26 gennaio 1917, p. 56.

⁴⁶ Cfr. P. Rugafiori, *Nella Grande Guerra*, in *Storia di Torino*. VIII. *Dalla Grande Guerra alla Liberazione (1914-1945)*, a cura di N. Tranfaglia, Torino, Einaudi, 1998, 9 voll., pp. 7-104 (pp. 42-3).

⁴⁷ Cfr. *Tutti fanno il loro dovere*, «Avanti!», 22 febbraio 1917, p. 131.

Gli esercenti, dal canto loro, istituiscono nel giugno del 1917 una Società anonima che raggiunge rapidamente il migliaio di soci, allo scopo di difendere gli interessi della categoria⁴⁸. A soffrire di più sono soprattutto i piccoli negozianti, costretti a fare i conti sia con i calmieri sia con la pressione al rialzo dei prezzi da parte dei grossisti. Gramsci coglie in modo efficace il disagio del minutista, «il *Monssù Botegari*», che vuole gli sia lasciato il margine di guadagno occorrente per il mantenimento della famiglia e dichiara che rappresenta «uno dei rottami» che la storia ha lasciato dietro, esercitando una funzione che ormai può essere svolta meglio nell'interesse generale da altri soggetti, come le cooperative⁴⁹. A Torino, in particolare, l'Alleanza Cooperativa rappresenta «uno strumento colossale di emancipazione economica», dimostrando ciò che può fare l'iniziativa collettiva anche in regime borghese. Pur immersa in un ambiente ostile, essa può diventare «fattore di storia» ed essere rivolta a scopi superiori di lotta politica⁵⁰. Infatti, già nel 1916, Gramsci aveva paragonato le cooperative ai primi aggregati capitalistici che squarciarono il feudalesimo. Esse hanno quindi un valore rivoluzionario: moltiplicandosi e ampliandosi, costituiranno tante armi puntate contro il regime borghese e quanto più saranno numerose, tanto più facilmente si supererà «la crisi terribile» che accompagnerà il passaggio da un ordine sociale all'altro⁵¹.

Nonostante il buon funzionamento delle cooperative socialiste, anche a Torino la situazione alimentare tende ad aggravarsi nel corso del 1917: mentre la popolazione continua ad aumentare, si assiste a una pesante riduzione dei consumi con gravi disagi per le fasce più deboli. Diviene necessario, per alcuni beni, introdurre la tessera, ma ancora una volta Gramsci denuncia il ritardo con cui l'amministrazione comunale agisce: nel caso dello zucchero, la tessera è creata nel febbraio del 1917, dopo che per due anni il prezzo della derrata è aumentato costantemente, favorendo il polarizzarsi dei consumi verso le classi

⁴⁸ Cfr. P. Rugafiori, *Nella Grande Guerra* cit., p. 46.

⁴⁹ Raksha, *Monssù Botegari*, «Il Grido del Popolo», XXII, n. 651, 13 gennaio 1917, pp. 24-6.

⁵⁰ *La prova*, «Avanti!», 29 settembre 1917 e «Il Grido del Popolo», XXII, n. 688, 29 settembre 1917, pp. 499-501.

⁵¹ Alfa Gamma, *Socialismo e cooperazione*, «L'Alleanza Cooperativa», X, n. 116, 30 ottobre 1916; in A. Gramsci, *Cronache torinesi* cit., pp. 600-3.

ricche, per le quali il costo di un bene «è un particolare secondario». Esse hanno potuto fare comodamente incetta del prezioso alimento e l'introduzione della tessera non può preoccuparli in alcun modo⁵². Il giovane sardo accusa inoltre Rossi di aver usato la sua carica di sindaco per garantire la quantità di zucchero necessaria alla produzione di alcoolici della sua impresa e di aver trasformato Torino «in un lucroso feudo della sua famiglia», additandolo come un vero e proprio «modello di pervertimento del carattere», sul quale dovrebbero riflettere tutti coloro che desiderano un'Italia migliore⁵³.

Tuttavia, nel giugno del 1917, anche un politico navigato come l'industriale del vermouth commette un errore: durante una manifestazione pubblica, dando libero sfogo alla propria stanchezza per la guerra, esclama che Giolitti è più che mai nel cuore degli italiani e attaccato da tutti gli ambienti interventisti, è costretto a dimettersi. Gli succede l'assessore più anziano della Giunta, Leopoldo Usseglio, che amministra la città con la stessa scarsa solerzia del suo predecessore nelle questioni annonarie, ma a fine luglio la situazione si aggrava all'improvviso, perché si verifica la più grave penuria di grano dall'inizio della guerra: per due settimane di seguito, le donne sono costrette a correre da un negozio all'altro alla ricerca del pane, formando lunghe code davanti ai fornai. Il 22 agosto, l'exasperazione dei consumatori è tale che scoppiano tumulti veri e propri: la sommossa si trasforma velocemente in una violenta protesta contro il conflitto mondiale, che si protrae per alcuni giorni e quando il movimento si spegne, il bilancio è di cinquanta morti, centinaia di feriti e migliaia di dimostranti arrestati⁵⁴. Anche se si è trattato di un'agitazione spontanea, quasi tutti i dirigenti socialisti locali vengono colpiti da mandato di cattura: Gramsci entra a far parte del comitato provvisorio che assume la guida della sezione torinese e diventa il direttore di fatto del «Grido del Popolo»⁵⁵.

⁵² *Le tessere e la favola del furbo*, «Avanti!», 28 febbraio 1917, pp. 144-6.

⁵³ *De profundis*, ivi, 12 giugno 1917, pp. 327-9.

⁵⁴ Si veda: A. Monticone, *Gli italiani in uniforme. 1915-1918. Intellettuali, borghesi e disertori*, Bari, Laterza, 1972, pp. 89-144.

⁵⁵ Si veda: P. Spriano, *Storia di Torino operaia e socialista. Da De Amicis a Gramsci*, Torino, Einaudi, 1958, pp. 416-31.

La stampa interventista è compatta nel considerare la propaganda socialista come la vera causa dell'insurrezione e il giovane sardo difende con forza gli operai scesi in piazza: le calunnie degli avversari non possono intaccarne «la purità morale» ed essi proseguono fieramente nel proprio cammino, fatto di sofferenze e di sacrifici⁵⁶. Anzi, respingendo le accuse di antipatriottismo, dichiara che se un germe di coscienza nazionale esiste negli strati popolari, il merito è proprio del socialismo: dopo l'Unità, l'Italia era costituita da milioni di individui che vivevano sparsi nel territorio e il cui mondo era ristretto all'orizzonte del campanile del proprio paese natale. Il particolarismo è stato superato grazie alla propaganda socialista: i proletari hanno sviluppato una solidarietà con altri uomini che si trovavano nelle medesime condizioni, per cui imparare a leggere e a scrivere nella stessa lingua divenne ben presto una necessità vitale, al fine di scambiare idee e speranze. La nascita e l'affermazione del PSI hanno segnato per l'Italia «un nuovo Rinascimento», quello degli strati più poveri: nessun altro gruppo politico ha generato un fenomeno simile, anzi, al contrario, i governanti liberali hanno «spezzettato» il paese in tante zone tra loro rivali, creando antagonismi artificiosi attraverso le politiche protezionistiche⁵⁷.

Nell'immediato, critiche alla condotta dei socialisti torinesi provengono anche da esponenti della destra del PSI, come Claudio Treves, che si lancia in una vera e propria requisitoria contro i rivoluzionari. Tracciando una analogia tra la guerra e la lotta di classe, afferma che in entrambi i casi è possibile adottare due diverse strategie: o attaccare il nemico o attendere sulla difensiva il suo logoramento. I riformisti sono per la seconda soluzione «e la sterilità» dei moti torinesi ha dimostrato che non si possono ottenere risultati apprezzabili attraverso sistemi diversi. Per i rivoluzionari, invece, ciò che conta è il «fare *per fare qualche cosa*»: si illudono che una minoranza attiva possa «dettar legge al mondo», ma in realtà, le insurrezioni non servono ad altro che a seminare lutti e a sacrificare inutilmente i più generosi⁵⁸.

⁵⁶ *Il signor Conte Delfino Orsi*, pp. 423-6.

⁵⁷ *Il socialismo e l'Italia*, «Il Grido del Popolo», XXII, n. 687, 22 settembre 1917, pp. 481-84.

⁵⁸ C. Treves, *Antica predica*, «Critica Sociale», XXVII, n. 17, 1°-15 settembre 1917, pp. 217-19.

La risposta di Gramsci rivela una concezione del partito e del suo rapporto con le masse totalmente diversa: egli prende le distanze dalla visione di Treves, in cui la vita degli uomini diventa una enorme scacchiera dove i pezzi vengono mossi secondo una strategia precisa, «preventivamente sicuri del successo o dell'insuccesso», e dove la volontà è considerata positivamente quando è rinunciataria, mentre si connota negativamente se assume l'iniziativa. Il deputato riformista costruisce l'immagine di un esercito proletario composto da soldati semplici e da una schiera ristretta di ufficiali e sottoufficiali che costituiscono il partito. Anche se, nel dopoguerra, lo stesso Gramsci, riferendosi all'organizzazione operaia ricorrerà frequentemente al paragone con l'esercito, egli rifiuta per il momento l'idea di una gerarchia reale tra i dirigenti e le masse:

I socialisti non sono gli ufficiali dell'esercito proletario, sono una parte del proletariato stesso, ne sono la coscienza forse, ma come la coscienza, non può esser scissa da un individuo, così i socialisti non possono essere posti in dualismo col proletariato. Sono uno, sempre uno, e non comandano, ma vivono col proletariato, come il sangue circola e si muove nelle vene di un corpo, e non può essere fatto vivere e muover entro tubi di gomma avvoltolati intorno a un cadavere.

Nelle condizioni create dalla guerra, il più grande successo che il proletariato possa raggiungere è quello di «dimostrare di esistere»⁵⁹.

Gramsci accusa a sua volta i riformisti di aver ridotto la solidarietà di classe a spirito «di corporazione e località», trascurando che il benessere conquistato da ristrette aristocrazie operaie si traduceva in miseria «per una enorme maggioranza» di proletari poveri. Quindi, se si confronta il modo d'agire dei riformisti e quello dei rivoluzionari, sono i primi a uscirne sconfitti: il rivoluzionarismo supera i particolarismi ed è «una coscienza integrale di tutti i problemi della vita, attuali, immediati e futuri»; esso non considera la massa come una «pupilla», ma come la protagonista della sua storia, «giudice, essa stessa» dei mezzi attraverso i quali raggiungere i suoi fini⁶⁰.

⁵⁹ *Analogie e metafore*, «Il Grido del Popolo», XXII, n. 686, 15 settembre 1917, pp. 464-66.

⁶⁰ *La Giustizia*, ivi, n. 690, 13 ottobre 1917, pp. 536-38.

La reazione che segue ai fatti di Torino, dichiarata dal 18 settembre 1917 zona di guerra⁶¹, convince sempre più i riformisti della necessità di appoggiare un governo moderato, vicino ai bisogni popolari. Essi pensano in particolare a un ritorno di Giolitti al potere, il quale, proprio pochi giorni prima della sommossa torinese, aveva pronunciato un discorso dai contenuti molto avanzati, dichiarando che i soldati e i lavoratori, dopo tutte le sofferenze patite in guerra, avevano diritto di reclamare ordinamenti improntati a una maggior giustizia sociale e le classi dirigenti avevano il dovere di accontentarli⁶².

Il vecchio leader liberale, secondo Gramsci, sfrutta semplicemente il clima di confusione e di attesa generato dalla conflagrazione mondiale per tornare protagonista della vita politica⁶³. In realtà, è colui che ha dato al paese i governi «più truffaldini» e un atteggiamento collaborazionista alienerebbe al partito la simpatia di moltissimi italiani, che considerano ormai il PSI il loro «centro spirituale». I socialisti attraversano un momento cruciale, perché possono diventare tutto, come possono perdere tutto: «Giolitti è anch'egli un avversario, forse, in questo momento, il più temibile degli avversari»⁶⁴.

3. Tra le prime iniziative che Gramsci intraprende dopo aver assunto la direzione del «Grido del Popolo», vi è la pubblicazione, a ottobre, di un numero unico sul protezionismo, in cui afferma che la lotta contro i dazi è «una reazione contro le cause che hanno contribuito a determinare la guerra» e rappresenta «l'affermazione di una aspirazione di solidarietà umana», mirante a spegnere l'odio tra i popoli, favorendo l'avvento di «una più ampia e profonda fratellanza tra le nazioni»⁶⁵.

Poche settimane prima, riflettendo sulle cause che producono i conflitti, aveva osservato come essi siano legati al sistema di pro-

⁶¹ Cfr. P. Spriano, *Storia di Torino operaia* cit., p. 442.

⁶² Cfr. G. Giolitti, *Discorsi extraparlamentari*, saggio introduttivo di N. Valeri, Torino, Einaudi, 1952, pp. 289-91.

⁶³ Cfr. *Assicurazione alla vita*, «Avanti!», 16 agosto 1917, pp. 418-20.

⁶⁴ *I fatti di Torino al Parlamento nel discorso dell'onorevole Casalini*, «Il Grido del Popolo», XXII, n. 692, 27 ottobre 1917, pp. 561-63.

⁶⁵ *I socialisti per la libertà doganale*, ivi, n. 691, 20 ottobre 1917, pp. 552-54.

duzione capitalistico, tanto che possono essere considerati una «fatalità borghese», espressione che però non va intesa in senso letterale – perché altrimenti le nazioni sarebbero perennemente in guerra tra di loro – ma «nel senso idealistico», come interpretazione di una necessità. La guerra esiste potenzialmente, ma si concretizza quando un gruppo borghese decide che è venuto il momento di scatenarla, per conquistare o difendere un privilegio. Gramsci ribadisce che il vero problema è l'indifferenza dei più, perché sono ancora pochi gli uomini che si preoccupano «di non lasciar aggruppare dei nodi che poi domanderanno l'intervento della spada per sciogliersi». Infatti, c'è chi lavora di continuo per fomentare i conflitti: sono i «professionisti della guerra», autentici «seminatori di panico», i quali cercano di suscitare odi tra le nazioni, perché c'è chi dalla guerra ottiene ingenti guadagni, mentre la collettività non ne ricava che lutti e rovine. Gramsci ricorda che, prima del 1914, accadeva frequentemente che in ogni paese, giornali legati a industrie produttrici di armi, pubblicassero notizie di progetti bellicosi da parte di potenze rivali e invocassero contromisure adeguate. In Inghilterra, si parlava di dirigibili tedeschi che sorvolavano minacciosamente le città dell'Est e lo stesso accadeva in Germania, fino alla notizia, completamente falsa, che Norimberga era stata bombardata dai francesi, cosa che favorì l'adesione popolare alla guerra. I socialisti devono cercare di ingrandire il proprio movimento, per sostituire quanto prima la classe dominante al potere e nel frattempo devono esercitare un controllo su quei gruppi borghesi «che creano le ore topiche»:

Il secondo compito integra il primo: non basta essere contrari alla guerra in genere, come non basta dichiararsi socialisti genericamente. Bisogna cercare di far evitare le guerre in ispecie, smontando tutti i trucchi, sventando le trame dei seminatori di panico, degli stipendiati dell'industria bellica, degli stipendiati delle industrie che domandano le protezioni doganali per la guerra economica. Poiché è pur necessario che la guerra scoppi in un certo momento, bisogna impedire che questo momento arrivi mai.

La maggioranza del popolo, ancora estranea agli ideali del socialismo, si lascia facilmente ingannare dalle «sirene»: deve essere il PSI «a

gettare sulla società borghese la rete del proprio controllo», per impedire in futuro un'altra distruzione così enorme di vite e di ricchezze⁶⁶.

Secondo Gramsci, è soprattutto nell'ambito delle relazioni economiche internazionali che deve esplicarsi tale azione di controllo socialista, lottando per il conseguimento di politiche che riducano al minimo le ragioni di conflitto. Da qui, la decisione di pubblicare un numero unico contro il protezionismo, riprendendo alcune tesi a favore del liberismo già espresse nell'estate del 1916⁶⁷; tuttavia, mentre all'epoca aveva esaltato le ragioni economiche e morali che liberisti e socialisti potevano condividere, adesso sottolinea il fatto che il PSI persegue delle finalità proprie in questa lotta, legate alla realizzazione del suo programma massimo:

Dal modo in cui esso [il problema doganale] sarà risolto dipende la possibilità o meno di sviluppare le forze spontanee di produzione che ciascun paese possiede e quindi di affrettare o tardare quella maturità economica che è fondamento necessario all'avvento del socialismo; da esso dipende l'inasprirsi delle rivalità che oggi tengono divise le varie nazioni o la creazione di rapporti più intimi che dovranno determinare il passaggio dalla nazione all'internazionale.

Il motivo principale per cui i proletari devono contrastare il protezionismo è che, oltre a fomentare le guerre, ritarda il raggiungimento delle condizioni economiche necessarie all'avvento della rivoluzione⁶⁸. Gramsci, quindi, avversa ogni tentativo di alterare quella legge della libera concorrenza che caratterizza il regime della proprietà privata e la cui piena applicazione favorisce il raggiungimento della forma più evoluta di capitalismo. Il suo liberismo non è quindi una forma di condiscendenza verso modelli della cultura borghese – accusa rivoltagli all'epoca da qualche compagno di sezione e ripresa anche in sede

⁶⁶ A. G., *Il canto delle sirene*, ivi, n. 688, 6 ottobre 1917 e «Avanti!», 10 ottobre 1917, pp. 521-7.

⁶⁷ Si veda: *Contro il feudalesimo economico*, «Il Grido del Popolo», XXI, n. 628, 5 agosto 1916; Argiropulos, *Contro il feudalesimo economico*, ivi, 12 agosto 1916; *Contro il feudalesimo economico. Perché il libero scambio non è popolare*, ivi, n. 630, 19 agosto 1916. Gli articoli sono riportati in A. Gramsci, *Cronache torinesi* cit.

⁶⁸ *I socialisti per la libertà doganale* cit.

storiografica – ma insieme all'intransigenza è parte integrante di una strategia funzionale alla radicalizzazione dell'antagonismo di classe⁶⁹.

Pertanto è contrario non solo al protezionismo, ma anche all'intervento pubblico nell'economia. Già sulla «Città futura», aveva fatto alcune osservazioni in merito alle ingerenze statali verificatesi nelle due principali potenze belligeranti, l'Inghilterra e la Germania, poco prima della guerra: nel 1909, Lloyd George aveva proposto un progetto di legge agraria che colpiva le grandi proprietà, ridistribuendole nel caso fossero mal coltivate; nell'Impero tedesco, nel 1913, la maggioranza dei socialisti aveva votato a favore dell'aumento delle spese militari, perché i costi sarebbero stati coperti con una imposta sui grandi redditi. Secondo Gramsci, tali misure rappresentano una forma di «socialismo di Stato borghese» che, lungi dall'intaccare il potere della borghesia, lo accrescono, perché fanno sì che, in questi paesi, il proletariato conduca la lotta di classe senza cadere in eccessi, sentendosi tutelato dal governo⁷⁰.

Tuttavia, con il protrarsi della guerra, anche lo Stato italiano accresce e dilata le sue funzioni attraverso una congerie di comitati e uffici che intervengono direttamente nell'attività economica e finanziaria, portando a una parziale sospensione delle dinamiche di mercato. Alcuni riformisti seguono con interesse lo sviluppo di tale fenomeno: Treves osserva che si stanno creando delle forme di ordinamento collettivistico, le quali rappresentano «documenti inconfutabili della bancarotta dell'individualismo» e valgono come esempi, «sia pure materiali e grossolani», dell'esercizio di una economia comunista⁷¹.

Gramsci prende le distanze da simili posizioni, ritenendo che, in Italia, sin dall'Unità, lo Stato rappresenti «il maggior nemico dei cittadini»: ogni accrescimento dei suoi poteri coincide con un aumento della miseria degli individui e comporta «un abbassamento generale del livello di vita pubblica, economica e morale». I monopoli, introdotti

⁶⁹ Tra i principali sostenitori dell'esistenza di una fase liberale di Gramsci: G. Bergami, *Il giovane Gramsci e il marxismo. 1911-1918*, Milano, Feltrinelli, 1977 e D. Losurdo, *Antonio Gramsci dal liberalismo al comunismo critico*, Roma, Gamberetti, 1997.

⁷⁰ *Tre principii, tre ordini*, «La Città futura», 11 febbraio 1917, pp. 84-92.

⁷¹ C. Treves, *Maggio nel sangue*, «Critica sociale», XXV, n. 9, 1°-15 maggio 1915, pp. 129-31.

nel corso della guerra, servono soltanto a «mantenere intatto il privilegio delle ristrette categorie di cui lo Stato è prigioniero»⁷².

Il giovane rivoluzionario non si limita a denunciare le carenze e le anomalie della compagine statale italiana, ma tenta di individuare quelle che sono le cause principali della sua arretratezza, facendole risalire al processo di unificazione nazionale di cui, già nel 1917, abbozza un discorso critico, ricorrendo alla distinzione engelsiana tra classe economica e classe storica: una classe economica si trasforma in classe storica, quando passa dal terreno della produzione a quello politico della sovrastruttura. Si tratta del percorso che una classe deve compiere per diventare l'elemento organizzatore di una società. A tale legge si è sottratta la borghesia italiana, la quale ha creato uno Stato senza aver raggiunto un adeguato sviluppo economico su tutto il territorio nazionale: la mancanza di programmi chiari e rettilinei nei partiti politici della classe dominante dipende dal fatto che essa non è mai stata una vera classe di produttori, ma «un'accolta di politicanti»⁷³.

Le cose cominciano a cambiare con la nascita del movimento nazionalista: sul finire del 1917, Gramsci si accorge che le argomentazioni di Corradini e dei suoi sodali trovano corrispondenza negli interessi di determinati ceti capitalistici, che nel nazionalismo vedono il loro partito politico, «il teorico dei loro bisogni e delle loro aspirazioni»⁷⁴. Il conglutinarsi di singole categorie di produttori su un programma chiaro e concreto costituisce il sorgere della borghesia «come organismo combattivo e cosciente»; tuttavia, poiché tale processo è appena agli inizi, Gramsci ritiene normale che la borghesia abbracci il programma economico nazionalista, in pratica il protezionismo, volto alla tutela di interessi particolari, e stabilisce una affinità tra l'ideologia nazionalista e il riformismo socialista, ritenendole due dottrine immature e retrograde, tipiche di uno stadio di sviluppo fermo al livello corporativo. I nazionalisti «sono i paladini dei “diritti” delle corporazioni borghesi», così come molti riformisti identificano con tutto il proletariato una singola categoria di lavoratori, per la quale

⁷² *Lo Stato e l'utile dei cittadini*, «Avanti!», 8 aprile 1917, pp. 225-7.

⁷³ *Per chiarire le idee sul riformismo borghese*, ivi, 11 dicembre 1917, pp. 642-4.

⁷⁴ *Il riformismo borghese*, ivi, 5 dicembre 1917, pp. 629-31.

tentano di ottenere dei benefici. Quando la borghesia supererà lo stadio corporativo, si accorgerà che il liberalismo è la vera dottrina di classe, la sola che tenda a una saldatura tra le varie borghesie nazionali e che porti a un accrescimento della ricchezza capitalistica globale attraverso il liberismo⁷⁵.

Allo stesso modo, la vera dottrina del proletariato non è il riformismo, ma il socialismo rivoluzionario, destinato a crescere rapidamente, perché la guerra, col suo prolungarsi, favorisce il risveglio dall'indifferenza delle grandi masse, quelle rimaste sempre ai margini della lotta politica e sostanzialmente estranee anche alla propaganda marxista. Tali moltitudini provano vivo il desiderio di porre fine a un regime che ha reso possibile un conflitto lungo e sanguinoso come quello in corso: già nei giorni precedenti i moti torinesi, osservando le lunghe fila di donne in coda dinanzi alle panetterie, Gramsci aveva scritto che il disagio stava corrodendo «la fiducia istintiva e pecorile degli indifferenti», e che il risveglio riguardava gli strati più profondi della passività sociale⁷⁶. Durante la rotta di Caporetto, ribadisce che l'ingresso delle masse nella storia rappresenta la più grande novità prodotta dal conflitto e che si tratta di un fenomeno irreversibile:

Tre anni di guerra hanno prodotto degli effetti che i propugnatori della guerra erano ben lontani dal prevedere. Hanno smosso tutta una quantità di uomini che prima della guerra era lontana dalla lotta politica, era lontana dalla vita sociale. Questi uomini sentono ora dei bisogni che prima non sentivano, bisogni vaghi, indistinti, non concretati in un programma⁷⁷.

Nel dopoguerra, il pensiero di come gestire e inquadrare nell'organizzazione socialista tali moltitudini diventerà la preoccupazione dominante di Gramsci.

Nel frattempo, la rotta e l'invasione del territorio nazionale decretano la fine del Governo Boselli e portano alla formazione di un nuovo ministero sotto la guida di Orlando. In quei giorni di tensione e attesa,

⁷⁵ *Per chiarire le idee sul riformismo borghese* cit.

⁷⁶ *L'orologiaio*, «Avanti!», 13 agosto 1917 e «Il Grido del Popolo», XXII, n. 682, 18 agosto 1917, pp. 410-12.

⁷⁷ *Di chi la colpa?*, «Il Grido del Popolo», XXII, n. 695, 17 novembre 1917, pp. 588-90.

con il timore che il nemico possa arrivare in breve tempo a Milano, Turati e Treves si convincono della necessità di infondere fiducia ai soldati perché riprendano a combattere: i loro sforzi culminano nell'articolo *Proletariato e resistenza*, in cui sostengono chiaramente che quando la patria è oppressa, campeggia nell'anima di tutti «la ferma volontà di combattere, di resistere fino all'estremo», dal momento che con l'avanzata nemica sono a rischio gli istituti della democrazia e le libertà che giovano ai proletari «più ancora che ai borghesi»⁷⁸. Pochi giorni dopo, il 14 novembre, il Gruppo parlamentare socialista, in maggioranza riformista, vota compatto con il resto della Camera l'ordine del giorno che proclama la concordia nazionale e la fusione di tutte le energie per fronteggiare l'occupazione straniera⁷⁹.

Le voci di dissenso provenienti dall'ala rivoluzionaria del PSI sono regolarmente soppresse dalla censura e poiché anche il congresso ufficiale del partito viene annullato, la frazione intransigente decide di organizzare una riunione clandestina a Firenze, il 18 novembre. Vi partecipano Lazzari e Serrati per la Direzione e una quarantina di delegati delle sezioni più importanti, tra i quali Bordiga e Gramsci⁸⁰. Nel corso della riunione, si ribadisce che il socialismo deve mirare all'abbattimento rivoluzionario della società borghese, senza però fornire alcuna direttiva concreta al proletariato: semplicemente, si condannano le manifestazioni di solidarietà espresse dai riformisti. Bordiga consiglia di agire subito, perché il proletariato è armato e lo Stato disorganizzato, ma la maggioranza dei presenti, compresi Lazzari e Serrati, preferisce restare ancorata alla linea stabilita nel maggio del 1915, sintetizzata dalla formula “né aderire, né sabotare”, sostenendo che l'atteggiamento del partito non può dipendere dalle alterne fortune militari⁸¹.

⁷⁸ F. Turati - C. Treves, *Proletariato e resistenza*, «Critica Sociale», XXVII, n. 21, 1°-15 novembre 1917, p. 265.

⁷⁹ Si veda: L. Ambrosoli, *Né aderire, né sabotare*, Milano, Edizioni Avanti!, 1961, pp. 254-6.

⁸⁰ Cfr. P. Spriano, *Storia del Partito comunista italiano. I. Da Bordiga a Gramsci*, Torino, Einaudi, 1967, 5 voll., p. 4.

⁸¹ Si veda: G. Germanetto, *Souvenirs d'un perruquier*, Paris, Bureau d'éditions 1931, p. 113 e *Intervento alla commissione italiana dell'Esecutivo allargato dell'Internazionale comunista del novembre 1922*, in A. Gramsci, *Socialismo e fascismo. L'Ordine Nuovo 1921-1922*, Torino, Einaudi, 1978, p. 449.

A Firenze, Gramsci condivide la tesi bordighiana sull'opportunità di un intervento attivo del proletariato nella crisi e, come il giovane compagno napoletano, resta deluso dalle insufficienze del gruppo dirigente⁸². Tuttavia, non pensa ancora alla conquista del potere in tempi brevi: infatti, pochi giorni prima della riunione di Firenze, scrive un articolo a favore della Costituente, un'idea lanciata dopo la rotta dagli interventisti democratici, allo scopo di ottenere il consenso delle masse alla guerra. Egli afferma che la convocazione di una Assemblea Costituente permetterà di introdurre quelle libertà politiche ed economiche tipiche di un regime borghese, ma che in Italia ancora mancano, e favorirà la realizzazione di una «esatta discriminazione delle forze sociali» costitutesi negli ultimi tre anni, le quali daranno a loro volta la misura delle condizioni in cui proseguirà la lotta di classe, «fino a quando la realtà economica sia diventata tale da permettere l'avvento del socialismo»⁸³.

Rientrato a Torino, scrive un lungo intervento sulle mancanze che avverte nel Partito socialista: la critica è rivolta contro i riformisti, ma investe anche i rivoluzionari, ugualmente incapaci di prevedere il corso degli avvenimenti: «o davamo troppa importanza alla realtà del momento, ai fatti, o non ne davamo loro alcuna». Non si può procedere nello stesso modo, proprio perché «l'enorme moltitudine» che la guerra ha portato alla luce della storia, si aspetta dal socialismo un nuovo ordine. Ritiene necessario, pertanto, iniziare un lavoro di «intensificazione della vita morale» e giudica insufficiente la proposta, avanzata da Bordiga sull'«Avanguardia», di una revisione teorica dei metodi e dei programmi del partito, poiché gli errori commessi non dipendono in realtà dalle formule, ma dal fatto che siano rimaste qualcosa di inanimato, di non vissuto interiormente. Dunque, «occorre che cambiamo noi stessi, che cambi il metodo della nostra azione» e a tale scopo Gramsci considera utile la creazione di una nuova istituzione, un organo di cultura, che possa favorire e approfondire le

⁸² Cfr. P. Spriano, *Storia del Partito comunista italiano* cit., p. 4.

⁸³ *Di chi la colpa?* cit.

discussioni, «all'infuori di ogni contingenza politica ed economica»⁸⁴. La nuova associazione si occuperà di «tutto ciò che interessa o potrà interessare un giorno il movimento proletario», toccando anche problemi filosofici, religiosi ed etici, nella convinzione che il socialismo sia «una visione integrale della vita», con una sua filosofia e una sua morale. Da un lato, essa fornirà una soluzione alla questione degli intellettuali, che nel movimento non svolgono un compito adeguato alle proprie capacità; dall'altro, risolverà il problema di dover prendere le decisioni pungolati dalla fretta, cosicché i militanti finiscono per accettare le scelte non per intimo convincimento, ma sulla base della fiducia che ripongono nei dirigenti⁸⁵.

L'obiettivo di Gramsci è di instaurare una maggior democrazia all'interno del partito, in modo da supplire alle carenze strutturali della compagine socialista, assai più marcate da quando i riformisti hanno ceduto il timone ai rivoluzionari, nel 1912: da allora si sono verificati una serie di episodi di "bonapartismo", l'ultimo dei quali è stato quello di Mussolini, in cui il rapporto tra le masse e i dirigenti era di tipo carismatico, basato sull'autorità e sul prestigio del capo⁸⁶.

La proposta di creare un organo di cultura suscita un ampio dibattito sulle colonne dell'«Avanti!», ma pur ottenendo l'approvazione di alcuni operai, in pratica non avrà alcun seguito. Gramsci rileva che chi si oppone al progetto ha un concetto errato di cultura, ritenendo che significhi semplicemente il «sapere un po' di tutto», mentre essa è «un pensar bene, qualsiasi cosa si pensi, e quindi un operar bene, qualsiasi cosa si faccia». Quel che conta non è la conferenza del maestro ai discepoli, come accade all'Università popolare, ma «il lavoro minuto di discussione e di investigazione dei problemi, al quale tutti partecipano», dando ognuno un contributo e nel quale tutti sono, allo stesso tempo, maestri e discepoli⁸⁷.

⁸⁴ A. G., *Lecture*, «Il Grido del Popolo», XXII, n. 696, 24 novembre 1917, pp. 593-6. Per la posizione di Bordiga in merito a un rinnovamento del PSI, si veda: G. Savant, *Bordiga Gramsci* cit., pp. 175-6.

⁸⁵ *Per un'associazione di cultura*, «Avanti!», 18 dicembre 1917, pp. 660-62.

⁸⁶ Cfr. L. Paggi, *Gramsci e il moderno principe* cit., pp. 130-6.

⁸⁷ *Filantropia, buona volontà e organizzazione*, «Avanti!», 24 dicembre 1917, pp. 673-6.

In nome di tale concetto socratico della cultura, Gramsci crea sul finire del 1917, con alcuni compagni della sezione torinese, un “Club di vita morale”, il cui scopo è di abituare i giovani militanti alla discussione disinteressata dei problemi etici e sociali. A ogni partecipante viene assegnata la lettura di un saggio e, in seguito, deve esprimere le proprie riflessioni all’interno del gruppo, suscitando un dibattito che si chiude soltanto quando tutti i presenti sono in grado di comprendere i risultati del lavoro comune. Non solo: ogni iscritto è invitato a confessarsi pubblicamente e a lasciarsi consigliare dai compagni, in modo da stabilire «una comunione intellettuale e morale di tutti»⁸⁸.

Continua, nel frattempo, lo scontro all’interno del PSI, perché dopo la rotta di Caporetto, i deputati riformisti manifestano più volte l’intenzione di collaborare con il governo. Gramsci interviene in difesa del principio dell’intransigenza, ritenendo che nessuna circostanza, per quanto eccezionale, possa comportare una sospensione della lotta di classe:

Non è il proletariato che vuole la lotta di classe, essa è una condizione della sua vita, è una necessità biologica della sua vita. Rinunziare alla lotta di classe significherebbe per il proletariato morire, nel senso assoluto della parola. Perché le condizioni generali della vita sociale sono tali che nessuna volontà umana può fare che non siano, a meno di un suicidio generale⁸⁹.

In merito al problema della disciplina, Gramsci osserva che poiché il PSI si compone di molti individui, occorre che tutti siano d’accordo sullo scopo da raggiungere e sui mezzi da utilizzare, in modo che si possa chiedere a ciascuno l’osservanza delle regole stabilite. L’intransigenza nell’azione ha per presupposto «naturale e necessario la tolleranza nella discussione»: nel dibattito, deve «avvenire una fusione delle anime e delle volontà», così che al momento di agire tutti siano concordi e solidali. Naturalmente, non vi può essere tolleranza «per

⁸⁸ Lettera a Giuseppe Lombardo Radice, marzo 1918; in *Edizione nazionale degli scritti di Antonio Gramsci*. III. *Epistolario*. Primo tomo. *Gennaio 1906-dicembre 1922*, a cura di D. Bidussa, F. Giasi, G. Luzzatto Voghera e M. L. Righi, Roma, Istituto dell’Enciclopedia italiana, 2009. Con la partenza al fronte di alcuni iscritti, il gruppo si scioglie dopo pochi mesi.

⁸⁹ *La lotta di classe*, «Il Grido del Popolo», XXII, n. 697, 1° dicembre 1917, p. 626.

l'errore, per lo sproposito»: coloro che si sottraggono alla discussione, come i leaders riformisti, impediscono irresponsabilmente che si stabiliscano norme valide per tutti e producono incertezza e transigenza, elementi che alla lunga disgregano anche il più saldo organismo sociale⁹⁰.

Lo scontro interno al partito riapre il dibattito sulla possibilità di un accordo con gli anarchici: secondo alcuni militanti, la nuova Internazionale dovrà includere anche i libertari che, condividendo i principi dell'internazionalismo e dell'intransigenza, sono più vicini ai rivoluzionari dei riformisti⁹¹. Gramsci, appoggiato da Serrati, si oppone energicamente a una simile eventualità: a separare socialisti e anarchici non è solo l'antiparlamentarismo, ma il tipo di mentalità: «il nostro criticismo realistico non potrà accordarsi mai con l'astoricismo irriducibile degli anarchici». I riformisti si distaccano dal partito per divergenze pratiche, ma l'avvicinamento ai libertari implicherebbe «una confusione maggiore, e più pericolosa», tale da portare alla disgregazione del PSI stesso⁹².

4. L'evento principale che caratterizza il 1917, destinato a cambiare il futuro del mondo nei decenni successivi, è la caduta dell'autocrazia in Russia con le due rivoluzioni che si susseguono tra il febbraio e l'ottobre, fino all'avvento al potere dei bolscevichi. Gramsci segue con attenzione lo svolgersi degli avvenimenti e, sin dall'inizio, dichiara che il processo in corso proseguirà fino alla realizzazione del socialismo. Già sulla «Città futura», aveva affermato che la rivoluzione trova meno ostacoli in quegli Stati dove la società borghese è più arretrata: nelle nazioni dove non si verificano conflitti di piazza e le leggi fonda-

⁹⁰ A. G., *Intransigenza-tolleranza, intolleranza-transigenza*, ivi, n. 698, 8 dicembre 1917, pp. 637-9.

⁹¹ Cfr. Vezio [Spartaco Lavagnini], *La nuova Internazionale*, «La Difesa», XIX, n. 48, 1° dicembre 1917.

⁹² *Per la nuova Internazionale*, «Il Grido del Popolo», XXII, n. 698, 8 dicembre 1917 e «La Difesa», XIX, n. 50, 15 dicembre 1917, pp. 632-36. Serrati afferma di condividere le tesi di Gramsci in: G. M. Serrati, *Per la terza Internazionale?*, «Avanti!», 6 gennaio 1918.

tali sono rispettate, lo spirito rivoluzionario «si abbioscia» e il cambiamento sociale appare meno probabile⁹³.

Secondo Gramsci, l'ex Impero zarista rappresenta il primo paese dove i socialisti, «se non sono ancora tutto, sono almeno gran cosa» e possono diventare gli arbitri della situazione internazionale⁹⁴. Egli rifiuta il parallelo, stabilito da una parte della stampa borghese e dai riformisti del PSI, con la Rivoluzione francese: in Russia, non c'è il giacobinismo, termine che adopera in questo periodo con una forte connotazione negativa, considerandolo «un fenomeno puramente borghese». I giacobini avevano fini particolaristici e al regime autoritario dell'aristocrazia sostituirono un nuovo ordine altrettanto opprimente per le masse. I socialisti russi, invece, all'autocrazia zarista hanno sostituito il suffragio universale maschile e femminile, perché sono certi che l'ideale che essi incarnano «sia condiviso dalla maggioranza del popolo». Gramsci ritiene che la rivoluzione russa rappresenti «un atto proletario» e non perché attuata dalle masse – in tal caso lo sarebbe anche la guerra – ma perché sono intervenuti alcuni «fattori spirituali», che hanno prodotto un cambiamento nella morale, per cui essa «naturalmente deve sfociare nel regime socialista». Per dimostrare tale asserzione, riporta la notizia di un fatto accaduto nella città di Odessa: i rivoluzionari hanno liberato i prigionieri politici e anche quelli colpevoli di reati comuni. Ciò nonostante, alcuni decidono di restare in carcere per continuare a scontare le loro condanne fino alla fine: tale notizia ha importanza per i socialisti «quanto e più di quella della cacciata dello Zar», perché indica che la rivoluzione non ha solo sostituito potenza a potenza, «ma ha sostituito costume a costume», instaurando una autentica libertà spirituale⁹⁵.

Si evince, da tali affermazioni, che la previsione dell'approdo socialista non deriva da un'analisi delle forze reali che agiscono sulla scena, analisi resa difficile dalla frammentarietà e dalla scarsa attendibilità delle notizie che giungono dall'ex Impero zarista, ma da una

⁹³ *Tre principii, tre ordini* cit.

⁹⁴ *Morgari in Russia*, «Avanti!», 20 aprile 1917 e «Il Grido del Popolo», XXII, n. 666, 29 aprile 1917, pp. 242-5.

⁹⁵ A. G., *Note sulla rivoluzione russa*, «Il Grido del Popolo», XXII, n. 666, 29 aprile 1917, pp. 255-9.

serie di deduzioni di natura intellettuale, come il fatto che si sia evitato il giacobinismo e soprattutto che si stia verificando un rinnovamento della vita morale, aspetti essenziali all'interno della prospettiva rivoluzionaria gramsciana⁹⁶.

A luglio, il giovane sardo esprime per la prima volta il proprio sostegno alle posizioni dei bolscevichi: una nuova ondata di moti popolari ha appena portato alla formazione di un governo presieduto dal socialrivoluzionario Kerenskij, mentre Lenin e vari dirigenti del suo partito, ritenuti responsabili dell'insurrezione, sono costretti a fuggire. Gramsci elogia l'attività svolta fino a qual momento dai bolscevichi e si dice certo che, se anche verranno travolti, non spariranno i loro seguaci che sono ormai «troppo numerosi». I massimalisti «sono la stessa rivoluzione russa»: vogliono realizzare «*tutto* il socialismo», impedendo che il processo in corso si arresti, attestandosi a un livello intermedio. La loro volontà si è incarnata in milioni di individui, suscitando continuamente nuove energie, per cui gli aggregati sociali si compongono e si ricompongono senza sosta, facendo sì che gli uomini siano finalmente «gli artefici del loro destino»⁹⁷.

Nel mese di agosto, giungono in Italia quattro rappresentanti del Soviet di Pietrogrado, il Consiglio di operai e soldati che un mese prima ha approvato il mandato d'arresto nei riguardi dei bolscevichi. Essi cercano di ottenere l'adesione del PSI a una Conferenza internazionale da svolgersi a Stoccolma, allo scopo di raggiungere al più presto una pace generale equa e giusta. Tuttavia, nelle varie città visitate in Italia, le folle li accolgono acclamando Lenin, considerato sempre più come il vero capo della rivoluzione, animato dalla volontà di andare fino in fondo, rifiutando qualsiasi soluzione di compromesso con i nemici di classe⁹⁸.

Il 13 agosto, due delegati, Gol'denberg e Smirnov, raggiungono Torino e tengono un comizio dinanzi a una folla di oltre trentamila

⁹⁶ Cfr. L. Rapone, *Cinque anni che paiono secoli* cit., pp. 367-8.

⁹⁷ A. G., *I massimalisti russi*, «Il Grido del Popolo», XXII, n. 679, 28 luglio 1917 e «l'Avanguardia», XI, n. 501, 12 agosto 1917, pp. 397-400.

⁹⁸ Cfr. S. Caretti, *La Rivoluzione russa e il socialismo italiano (1917-1921)*, Pisa, Nistri-Lischi, 1974, pp. 71-74. Si tratta di Gol'denberg, Ehrlich, Rusanov e Smirnov, di varie tendenze socialiste esclusa la bolscevica.

lavoratori; Gramsci dichiara entusiasta che la rivoluzione russa è l'inizio di una nuova vita per tutti⁹⁹, ma, influenzato dai giudizi dell'«Avanti!», nelle settimane successive, predilige il leader del Partito socialista rivoluzionario Černov, cui sono andate le simpatie del giornale diretto da Serrati sin dal mese di marzo: afferma infatti che Lenin è «il maestro di vita, l'agitatore di coscienze, il risvegliatore delle anime dormienti», mentre Černov «è il realizzatore», colui che guiderà il proletariato alla conquista del potere. La rivoluzione non può assolutamente fermarsi alla fase democratica rappresentata da Kerenski: i contadini e gli operai russi sono maturati rapidamente negli ultimi mesi e ora vogliono la libertà d'iniziare in concreto «la trasformazione del mondo economico e sociale della vecchia Russia tzarista»¹⁰⁰.

A novembre, a guidare il proletariato alla conquista del potere però non è il partito di Černov, ma quello bolscevico. Agli inizi di dicembre, quando la posizione di Lenin e dei suoi compagni appare decisamente più stabile, Gramsci scrive per il «Grido del Popolo» un articolo dedicato alle ultime vicende russe, ma la censura lo sopprime. Qualche settimana più avanti, Serrati lo pubblica come editoriale sul massimo organo socialista, contribuendo a ravvivare il dibattito sulla possibilità di instaurare il comunismo in un paese economicamente arretrato come la Russia.

L'articolo testimonia la presa di distanza di Gramsci da qualsiasi interpretazione deterministica del marxismo, tanto di destra quanto di sinistra. Già quattro mesi prima, riferendosi ai bolscevichi, il militante sardo aveva sostenuto che essi ritenevano possibile realizzare in qualunque momento il socialismo, perché erano rivoluzionari e non evoluzionisti:

E il pensiero rivoluzionario nega il tempo come fattore di progresso. Nega che tutte le esperienze intermedie tra la concezione del socialismo e la sua realizzazione debbano avere nel tempo e nello spazio una riprova assoluta e integrale. Queste esperienze basta che si attuino nel pensiero perché siano superate e si possa procedere oltre¹⁰¹.

⁹⁹ Cfr. *Il compito della rivoluzione russa*, «Avanti!», 15 agosto 1917, pp. 413-17.

¹⁰⁰ *Kerensky-Černov*, «Il Grido del Popolo», XXII, n. 688, 29 settembre 1917, pp. 496-98.

¹⁰¹ A. G., *I massimalisti russi* cit.

Tali affermazioni vengono riprese e sviluppate nel lungo editoriale di dicembre, nel quale definisce provocatoriamente la rivoluzione bolscevica come «la rivoluzione contro *Il Capitale*» di Marx, libro che in Russia era letto soprattutto dai borghesi, perché era la dimostrazione «della fatale necessità» che anche qui si formasse una civiltà capitalistica prima che il proletariato cominciasse a pensare alla propria riscossa. I fatti hanno invece dimostrato che i canoni del materialismo storico non sono così rigidi come teorizza una certa lettura positivista ed evoluzionista della dottrina di Marx: i bolscevichi «vivono il pensiero marxista, quello che non muore mai», perché continua la tradizione del pensiero idealistico italiano e tedesco, che perfino nel filosofo di Treviri «si era contaminato di incrostazioni positivistiche e naturalistiche». In realtà, massimo fattore di storia rimane pur sempre l'uomo o meglio «le società degli uomini», che sviluppano una volontà collettiva, la quale diventa a sua volta «la plasmatrice della realtà oggettiva»:

Marx ha preveduto il prevedibile. Non poteva prevedere la guerra europea, o meglio non poteva prevedere che questa guerra avrebbe avuto la durata e gli effetti che ha avuto. Non poteva prevedere che questa guerra, in tre anni di sofferenze indicibili, di miserie indicibili, avrebbe suscitato in Russia la volontà collettiva popolare che ha suscitato. Una volontà di tal fatta *normalmente* ha bisogno per formarsi di un lungo processo di infiltrazioni capillari, di una larga serie di esperienze di classe.

In condizioni di pace, i proletari si organizzano lentamente, cominciando a creare le leghe e le società di mutuo soccorso, in un crescendo di pressioni esercitate sulla borghesia per migliorare la loro posizione. Questo spiega perché «*normalmente*, i canoni di critica storica del materialismo colgono la realtà»: la lotta di classe si sviluppa progressivamente, aumentando di intensità col passare del tempo. Quando però il ritmo dei fatti viene alterato da un evento imprevedibile come la guerra, allora la dinamica sociale può subire una brusca svolta:

Ma in Russia la guerra ha servito a spoltrire le volontà. Esse, attraverso le sofferenze accumulate in tre anni, si sono trovate all'unisono molto rapidamente.

La carestia era immanente, la fame, la morte per fame poteva cogliere tutti, maciullare d'un colpo decine di milioni d'uomini. Le volontà si sono messe all'unisono, meccanicamente prima, attivamente, spiritualmente dopo la prima rivoluzione.

Il conflitto mondiale ha fatto saltare gli schemi e «la predicazione socialista ha creato la volontà sociale del popolo russo», rendendo possibile il passaggio al nuovo ordine. Certo, «sarà in principio il collettivismo della miseria, della sofferenza», ma le stesse difficoltà che i socialisti devono affrontare, le dovrebbero superare anche i borghesi, che si troverebbero davanti un proletariato incapace di sopportare per altri i sacrifici che lo sviluppo economico comporterebbe. Il socialismo, quindi, trova la sua giustificazione anche da un punto di vista umano e i massimalisti diventano «la espressione spontanea, *biologicamente* necessaria perché l'umanità russa non cada nello sfacelo più orribile», ma possa cominciare a costruire una società migliore¹⁰².

La guerra ha quindi funzionato come un formidabile acceleratore della lotta di classe in Russia, ma per quel che riguarda l'Italia e l'Occidente, ancora fino a tutto il 1918, Gramsci rimane ancorato a una visione della rivoluzione che si verificherà quando il regime capitalistico avrà raggiunto il punto massimo di sviluppo. Anche la principale lezione impartita dai bolscevichi, ovvero la creazione di una nuova forma di Stato basata sul sistema dei Soviet, viene messa a frutto dal rivoluzionario sardo soltanto nella primavera del 1919, quando con un gruppo di intellettuali e operai raccolto intorno alla rivista «L'Ordine Nuovo», dà vita a Torino al movimento dei Consigli di fabbrica. I nuovi istituti proletari si basano sull'autogoverno degli operai-produttori e pur non costituendo una rigida traduzione italiana dei Soviet, rappresentano probabilmente, con tutti i loro limiti, l'unico tentativo concreto di applicare la lezione di Lenin nel nostro paese, prima dell'avvento del fascismo.

¹⁰² A. G., *La rivoluzione contro «Il Capitale»*, «Il Grido del Popolo», XXII, n. 697, 1 dicembre 1917, «Avanti!», 22 dicembre 1917 (ed. romana) e ivi, 24 dicembre 1917 (ed. milanese), pp. 617-21.



UNIVERSITY
OF WOLLONGONG
AUSTRALIA

2018

Scritti [Writings] (1910-1926). Vol. 2, Scritti [Writings] 1917, Leonardo Rapone (ed.) (in English)

Giovanna Savant

Follow this and additional works at: <http://ro.uow.edu.au/gramsci>

Recommended Citation

Savant, Giovanna, Scritti [Writings] (1910-1926). Vol. 2, Scritti [Writings] 1917, Leonardo Rapone (ed.) (in English), *International Gramsci Journal*, 2(4), 2018, 116-150.

Available at: <http://ro.uow.edu.au/gramsci/vol2/iss4/7>

Scritti [Writings] (1910-1926). Vol. 2, Scritti [Writings] 1917, Leonardo Rapone (ed.) (in English)

Abstract

In this editorial presentation of Giovanna Savant's review article and her detailed reconstruction of the historical context to Gramsci's journalistic output in 1917, notes to page numbers where not otherwise specified are to the volume of the National Edition edited by Leonardo Rapone. Cross references are included to aid readers in finding articles included in the earlier publications of Gramsci's pre-prison writings; the English-language version of her article also includes references to standard English translations, where available. It should be borne in mind that Gramsci's various newspaper articles were at times heavily censored and a great merit of Rapone's volume, apart from its more authoritative attribution of authorship, is to have often found the censored passages in archives or outlying areas where the censorship was less rigid and reinstated them. Readers should therefore realize that words quoted in the text of Savant's contribution are not always to be found in the standard Italian collections of Gramsci's writings, but sometimes only in the volume which she here discusses.

Keywords

Journalism 1917; new attributions; situation in Turin; nationalism; critique of socialists; Russian revolutions

Antonio Gramsci:
Scritti / Writings (1910-1926) Vol. 2:
Writings 1917*

Giovanna Savant

1. As part of the *National Edition* of Gramsci's writings, the volume edited by Leonardo Rapone is the first one to be devoted to his journalistic activities before he was arrested. Gramsci began to write regularly for the socialist press in October 1915, collaborating with the Turin daily "Grido del Popolo", and then as from December of that year, through the *Cronache torinesi*, the page devoted each day to Turin by the Milanese edition of "Avanti!", in which he devoted special attention to the column *Sotto la mole* and to theatre criticism.¹

The volume comprises all Gramsci's articles of 1917, including those in the "Grido del Popolo" which were deleted by the censorship but whose drafts are in Turin's State Archive. At the beginning of the 1980s, they were first brought to light there by Sergio Caprioglio, who edited them for the Einaudi publishing house as the last selection of the pre-prison writings (letters excluded) before the present *National Edition*. The greater part of these articles are not signed, as established by a norm introduced by the leadership of the Italian Socialist Party (PSI) in the autumn of 1914, so that no one could make use of a proletarian journal for personal ends.² One of Rapone's main problems has therefore been to single out, to the greatest possible extent of certainty, which texts may effectively be attributed to Gramsci.

* Antonio Gramsci *Scritti 1917*, ed. Leonardo Rapone with the collaboration of Maria Luisa Righi and the contribution of Benedetta Garzarelli. Roma, Istituto dell'Enciclopedia Italiana, 2015, pp. 810.

¹ See M.L. Righi, *Gli esordi di Gramsci al "Grido del Popolo e all'"Avanti!" (1915-1916)* [Gramsci's beginnings at the "Grido del Popolo" and "Avanti!" (1915-1916)] in "Studi Storici", LV (2014), no. 3, pp. 725-57.

² Cf. G.M. Serrati, *Per un casetto personale* (For a small personal case), "Avanti!", 13 September 1916 and A.G. *Un giornale in liquidazione. Un partito alla deriva. Intermezzo semiserio* (A newspaper in liquidation. A party that is drifting. A semi-serious intervention), "L'Unità", 16 September 1925, in A. Gramsci, *La costruzione del Partito comunista. 1923-1926*, Torino, Einaudi, 1971, pp. 405-9.

The point of departure for this work was a critical analysis of the previous editions of the journalistic writings, an analysis which led to the exclusion of a group of 22 articles which up to now had been considered to be by Gramsci. This exclusion was made on the basis that these texts were either subject to excessive mutilation by the censorship, leading to the impossibility of establishing authorship with certainty, or that stylistic usages are present which are quite different from those contained in articles that, with certainty, can be ascribed to Gramsci. Following the same reasoning, the few articles of uncertain attribution dating to 1917, included in Caprioglio's anthology *La Città futura*, have also here been excluded.³ As compared with these exclusions, the volume does include a group of 25 new articles, which, on the basis of reasoning explained in his *Notes on the text*, Rapone here for the first time attributes to Gramsci. Among these are five music reviews (of operas and piano concerts) which testify to Gramsci's interest in these forms of artistic expression.⁴

The texts are ordered chronologically, with no separation between theatre reviews and other articles. Gramsci's thought in 1917, and in general in the years of the Great War, was still in the process of being formed and, as the editor correctly notes, is best understood "only by embracing it its overall perspective and following it, step by step, in all its expressions".⁵

From a reading of the almost 300 articles collected together in the volume, one gains the impression of a militant journalist who, different from the majority of his colleagues, is not seeking to reassure readers with the usual clichés of low level propaganda, but is attempting to drive them towards a reflection, following an educational instinct that was to characterize his entire political activity. One example of this is "La Città futura", the single, one-off propaganda publication, which

³ A. Gramsci, *La Città futura. 1917-1918* (*The Future City. 1917-1918*), ed. S. Caprioglio, Torino, Einaudi, 1982 (hereafter CF 1982).

⁴ Cf. Rapone, *Nota al testo*, pp. XXIX-XXX. In the notes to each article of music criticism, the editor cites the judgment passed by other Turin newspapers on the same performances, thereby in many cases showing the originality of Gramsci's position.

⁵ Ibid., p. XXXI. The volume contains three appendices: a pocket Biography, containing information on the people quoted in Gramsci's articles, excluding the most well-known historical figures, but including all others contemporary with Gramsci; a Periodicals index, which includes all the journals cited in Gramsci's articles; and a name index.

came out on 11 February 1917 at the behest of the Piedmontese youth federation and which was prepared in its entirety by Gramsci. Its intended readership was in the main the young people who attended the evening schools and who, in Gramsci's view, could be brought towards socialism if they understood that, in the youth movement, they could find the means for raising their cultural training.⁶ However, it was just the high cultural tone characterizing the articles that ensured that this one-off number was received with some controversy within the youth organization and attracted the criticism that it was comprehensible only to a restricted élite of militants.⁷

Overall, "La Città futura" constitutes a clear and effective synthesis of the various elements comprising Gramsci's political thought after over three years of membership of the PSI, namely a revolutionary and anti-dogmatic Marxism, a critique of socialist reformism, and the importance of culture for the development of class consciousness in the proletariat.⁸ The single number also reveals the variety of interests characterizing Gramsci's intellectual background: as well as a core consisting of articles and his own brief interventions, one finds a passage from Gaetano Salvemini on culture, and two reflections on religion and the sense of life by, respectively, Benedetto Croce, defined as "the greatest thinker in Europe at this moment in time", and the philosopher Armando Carlini, a follower of Giovanni Gentile.⁹ As Gramsci would recall some years later, in one of his prison notes, at that time he "was tendentially somewhat Crocean" and his purpose was to use neoidealist philosophy as a means for the restoration of

⁶ Cf. the Regional Committee of the Piedmontese Youth Federation, *Concludendo una discussione utile* (*Concluding a Useful Discussion*) in "L'Avanguardia", XI, 485, 1 April 1917, pp. 209-10.

⁷ Cf. N. Cilla, *Nella nostra famiglia. Discussioni utili* (*Within our Family. Useful Discussions*), cit., 481-2, 4-11 March 1917.

⁸ Cf. Leonardo Paggi, *Gramsci e il moderno principe. I. Nella crisi del socialismo italiano* (*Gramsci and the Modern Prince. I In the Crisis of Italian Socialism*), Roma, Editori Riuniti, 2 volumes, pp. 8-9, where he claims that the one-off number took on the nature of "a sort of early work".

⁹ *Due inviti alla meditazione* (*Two invitations to meditate on*), "La Città futura", 11 February 1917, pp. 101-3. Readers are referred to the notes on pp. 101-2 for the description of the passages from Salvemini, Croce and Carlini and for the relevant bibliographical references (See also CF 1982, cit., pp. 21-2).

Marxism in the younger generation, just as Hegelianism had been the premise for historical materialism in the nineteenth century.¹⁰

In announcing publication of the sheet, Gramsci declared that the war had “scythed down the youth”, descending on their movement like a battle axe, albeit without succeeding in disabling it, since the socialists whose lives had been sacrificed had been replaced by others who previously had been extraneous to the political struggle. It was as if the conflict, “like a gust of wind, ha[d] shaken the indifferent”, making them fulfil their duty.¹¹ Condemnation of indifference is among the main themes of “La Città futura”:

Indifference is at work powerfully in history. It is at work passively but it is at work. It is fateful; it represents what you cannot rely on; it is what upsets programmes, what overturns the best laid plans; it is the raw material that rebels against intelligence and throttles it. What succeeds, the evil that descends over everything, the possible good that a heroic act (of universal value) may generate, is not due so much to the initiatives of the few as to the indifference, the absenteeism of the many.

What happens in history takes place because the masses let it happen, allowing the will of small groups to impose itself, thereby sealing the fate of an entire era. In Gramsci's view, such attitudes must be replaced by a new sensitivity, which makes everyone feel the sense of their own historical responsibility, “which does not allow for any sort of agnosticism and indifference”.¹²

Repudiation of passivity, however, is not enough. In order to be really socialist, it is necessary to carry out a further operation, in other words, one must get rid of all forms of sentimentalism as the main-spring of action. Gramsci had occasion to explain this a few days after the issue of “La Città futura”, when two representatives of the Belgian government, Alphonse Gaspar and Vincent Volckaert (a socialist worker and a Member of Parliament respectively), came on an official

¹⁰ Gramsci, *Quaderni del carcere*, Q10, part I, §11, p. 1233 of the critical edition, ed. Valentino Gerratana, Torino, Einaudi, 1975, p. 1233. [In English, *Further Selections from the Prison Notebooks*, ed. and trans. Derek Boothman, London Lawrence and Wishart, 1995, pp. 355.]

¹¹ “La Città futura”, “Il Grido del popolo”, XXII, no. 655, 11 February 1917, and “Avanti!”, 12 February 1917, pp. 80-3. (See CF 1982, cit., pp. 3 and 13.)

¹² *Indifferenti*, “La Città futura”, 11 February 1917, pp. 93-4. (See CF 1982, cit., pp. 13-15.)

visit to Turin. As had happened in other Italian cities, the two envoys told the press of the devastations their country had undergone as a result of the German invasion, claiming that they did not understand why the leaders of the Italian working-class movement had not responded to the call by the people of Belgium.¹³ A year before this, Gramsci had written that socialists could not but “feel anguish for the crushed little country of Belgium” but this anguish was an “austere” one, which did not induce them to merge and become one with the general expressions of emotion.¹⁴ On the basis of this conviction the error that he imputes to the two Belgian government envoys was that of attempting to transform emotion into a political weapon and, as such, the Italian socialists were right to refuse to take part in the game: their natural context was that of the class struggle and, from that point of view, there was nothing they could do for Belgium.¹⁵

Gramsci insisted on the question of character in order to emphasize the difference between the socialists and the bourgeois parties. These latter were formed by men who, immediately after the unification of Italy, had abandoned the Mazzinian and radical ideas that had inspired them in favour of order:

They were converted by sentimentalism or by the spirit of adaptation. Sentimentalism thus became the political principle that constructed Italian public life. This was a sentimentalism that destroys character, that hinders the formation of character. It substitutes confusion for logic, and the indistinct and the chaotic for the distinct. It negates any concrete programme, because it is prone to modifying itself according to those contingencies created by chance.¹⁶

Since the opponents of the working-class movement had a mentality “formed through transformism”, they led a day-to-day existence and were “idolaters of the single, isolated fact” which

¹³ See, for example, *Gaspar narra le sofferenze del popolo belga, suscitando una manifestazione di commossa solidarietà* (Gaspar tells of the sufferings of the Belgian people, evoking a manifestation of moving solidarity), “Gazzetta del popolo”, 26 February 1917.

¹⁴ *La commemorazione di Miss Cavell*, “Avanti!” 17 January 1916; in Gramsci, *Cronache torinesi 1913-1917*, ed. Sergio Caprioglio, Torino, 1980 (hereafter CT 1980), pp. 76-9.

¹⁵ Cf. *I monaci di Pascal* (Pascal’s monks), “Avanti!”, 26 February 1917, pp. 136-40. (See CF 1982, cit., pp. 56-9.)

¹⁶ Alfa Gamma, *Carattere*, “Il Grido del Popolo”, XXII, no. 658, 3 March 1917, pp. 150-3. (See CF 1982, cit., pp. 69-72.)

became the sole criterion of judgment, while the socialists saw above all continuity and dynamism.¹⁷ On this account, the militants of the PSI had become exponents of a new type of humanity which, turning its back on openheartedness and sentimentalist impulses – considered “lower forms of spiritual life” – did not fall into facile illusions. One of the principal merits of Italian socialism was therefore to have given something to the country that it had always lacked: a concrete example of the nature of its “adamantine character, fiercely proud of itself”.¹⁸

The rejection of openheartedness indicates the distancing that Gramsci took from the conviction, widespread among the intransigents of the Turin section, that sentiment was the principal reason for joining the workers’ movement.¹⁹ But it also reveals the influence was being exerted on Gramsci’s thought by a number of cultural reviews that he read attentively, such as “Leonardo” and “La Voce”; these were publications which, from the beginning of the century had been fighting for a moral regeneration of the country, to be realized through the development of certain qualities in the characters of the Italians. The main differences between Gramsci and such avant-garde groupings lay in the fact that, while the majority of intellectuals that composed them supported the cause of the Entente, considering the Great War the main instrument of the spiritual reform that was necessary, Gramsci on the other hand upheld opposition to the conflict as the founding element of the new human type.²⁰

In Gramsci’s view one of the main contributions toward enfeebling the character of the Italians came from religion; as long ago as 1916, he noted how it urged individuals to put their will in the hands of God and God’s ministers on earth, beginning to “manipulate” them from

¹⁷ *Il bozzacchione* (*The failure*), “Avanti!”, 5 June 1917, pp. 310-12. (See CF 1982, cit., pp. 187-8.)

¹⁸ *Carattere*, cit.

¹⁹ Amedeo Bordiga, as long ago as the youth Congress at Bologna in 1912, had expressed the conviction that sentiment was sufficient for adhering to socialism. Cf. Giovanna Savant, *Bordiga, Gramsci e la Grande Guerra (1914-1920)*, (*Bordiga, Gramsci and the Great War (1914-1920)*), Napoli, La Città del Sole, 2016, pp. 35-6.

²⁰ Cf. Leonardo Rapone, *Cinque anni che paiono secoli. Antonio Gramsci dal socialismo al comunismo (1914-1919)* (*Five Years that Seem Centuries. Antonio Gramsci from Socialism to Communism (1914-1919)*), Roma, Carocci, 2011, p. 108 and pp. 109-29, for a reconstruction of the debate on the character of the Italians from Unification to the Great War.

childhood, in the schools and parish social centres.²¹ These are subjects that he took up again in 1917, adding that through religious education, giving rise to a dogmatic and intolerant mentality, the Italian people lacked the love for free discussion and the desire to seek truth “through solely human means”.²² Even the Italian scout organization sprang up on a clearly confessional basis; while in Britain its scope was to educate and develop a sense of personal responsibility in children “to get each one used to act by themselves in the difficulty of action”, in Italy it became a “gymnasium of religious roles”, from which there emerged entire “battalions of narrow-minded and intolerant sanfedisti”.²³

Within the vast ecclesiastical organization, Gramsci singled out the Jesuits as the main contributors to the work of “destroying character”; because of their excellent organization and strong discipline, he likened them to big industry while, in comparison, the parish priests were mere artisans. The Company of Jesus represented “a form of clerical freemasonry” prone to act in the shadows, powerful and well-structured like the traditional freemasons. Gramsci considered such organizations to be fundamentally similar: as a weapon of propaganda, both used “deception, unbridled trickery, with no possible control on the part of public opinion” and for this reason had to be opposed by socialists.²⁴

Throughout 1917, Gramsci followed the Jesuits’ attempts to install themselves once more in Turin, where they tried to take over the Church of the Holy Martyrs from the secular clergy, and called for the application of the Pinelli law, which forbade them to have any residence in Italy. Socialists had never tire in the struggle against the masonic and Jesuit mentality, but more in general in the consciousness of the people, they should seek to replace the transcendental God of

²¹ *L'appello ai pargoli* (*The call to the children*), “Avanti!”, 31 July 1916. (See CT 1980, *cit.*, pp. 459-60.)

²² *Per un'Associazione di cultura* (*For a cultural association*), *ibid.*, 18 December 1917, pp. 660-62 (See CF 1982, *cit.*, pp. 497-500.)

²³ *Bilancio* (*A balance sheet*), *ibid.*, 4 September 1917, pp. 448-9. (See CF 1982, *cit.*, p. 309; ca. fifty lines of this article were censored.) [The “sanfedisti” – meaning the proponents of the “holy faith” (“santa fede”) – were the southern Italian followers of Cardinal Ruffo in the attempt, backed by the British, to overthrow the neo-Jacobin and democratic Neapolitan Republic of 1799 – tr. note.]

²⁴ *La rinascita gesuitica* (*The Jesuitic rebirth*), *ibid.*, 15 January 1917, pp. 29-33. (See CT 1980, *cit.*, pp. 701-4.)

the catholics with confidence in humankind and in its best forces as the sole spiritual reality.²⁵

This aim lay at the base of the harsh polemic which, in the Spring of 1917, involved Gramsci against the Turin catholic daily, “Momento”, on the occasion of the beatification of Giuseppe Benedetto Cottolengo, from the nearby province of Cuneo. Basing himself on a book by a Salesian priest, Gramsci accused the ecclesiastical hierarchy of having constantly attempted to put obstacles in the way of the various activities of the saint in favour of the poor, so that the beatification became a vulgar speculation aimed at exploiting his work and popularity for its own “sectarian goals”.²⁶ Cottolengo was considered a just man, who would have carried out the same work had he been a Buddhist or a Muslim, since he drew the necessary moral energy from a “far different source from Christian mythology”. As a catholic, he ought to have complied with the orders of his superiors, but he was a “man of character, more than a man of faith” and therefore disobeyed.²⁷ The demonstration that ethical behaviour did not have transcendental faith as a necessary presupposition assumed great importance for Gramsci, since it proved the possibility of socialism:

The problem of social initiative is the greatest problem of socialism. Our criticism tends to prove that one can have production even without the stimulus of private property, of privilege even without the mirage of individual overbearingness being within reach. And it is always the same problem. Against the conservatives, we deny the need for economic privilege for the production of wealth, as we deny, against the catholics, the need for religion for the production of good, of truth, of moral life.²⁸

Religion was not the only force to mar the character of individuals. Gramsci maintained that many defects inherent in the habits of the Italians derive from the fact that although “luminaries of science, of politics, of moral life and culture” had been born in the country, there

²⁵ Ibidem.

²⁶ *Il Cottolengo e i clericali (Cottolengo and the Clericals)*, “Avanti!”, 30 April 1917, pp. 260-61. (See CF 1982, cit., pp. 147-8.)

²⁷ *Il Cottolengo e i clericali*, ibid., 5 May 1917, pp. 264-68. (See CF 1982, cit., pp. 149-52.)

²⁸ *Rispondiamo a Crispolti (Let us reply to Crispolti)*, ibid., 19 June 1917, pp. 337-39. (see CF 1982, cit., pp. 214-6.)

had never been formed around them even a small group of pupils to carry out their teachings and principles. Citing the verses of a poem by Giuseppe Giusti, he claimed that “every Machiavelli” has always been surrounded by “a host of Stenterellos”, i.e. mediocre individuals who “shout and yell”, upholding the virtue of the Italians but do not work, and produce neither ideas, nor facts, because they do not know how “to adapt to a task that is modest but bears the fruit of the anonymous collectivity”.²⁹

War favoured the spread of Stenterellos, a category in which Gramsci included the interventionist intellectuals, the greater part of whom tried to transpose the conflict from the politico-military level to the spiritual one, exalting the spirit of the Latin peoples over the Germanic ones and representing the conflagration in progress as a conflict between civilization and barbarism. To their empty chatter against German science and culture, Gramsci contraposed a custom consisting of seriousness and work “which tempers individuals and which makes genuine personality emerge into the light of the sun”.³⁰

Gramsci’s criticisms refer in particular to the Anti-German League of Action, founded in Turin in June 1916, immediately after the *Strafexpedition*, with the aim of fulfilling a role of civil policing against external enemies (spies, infiltrators, but more generally all German citizens) and internal ones (opponents of the war and especially socialists), the target of continual, virulent attacks. In the words of its president, Professor Pietro Romano, its declared aim was to oppose the “damaging German penetration” of every sector of public life, in order to reach complete emancipation “from any Teutonic hegemony”.³¹

Members of the League, which numbered several of the teaching staff of Turin University, had a conception of the nation based on the

²⁹ *Stenterello*, *ibid.*, 10 March 1917, pp. 171-4. Giusti’s poem is *Il Memento*. (See CF 1982, cit., pp. 84-6.)

³⁰ *Demagogia artistica*, *ibid.*, 15 January 1917, pp. 34-37. (CF 1980, cit., pp. 705-7.)

³¹ P. Romano, *Note sull’interventismo torinese e il ventennale della vittoria (1914-1918)* (*Notes on interventionism in Turin and the twentieth anniversary of victory (1914-1918)*), Torino, Associazione torinese P. Micca, 1939. [The *Strafexpedition* is the name often given in Italy to what is also known as the Battle of the Altopiani {Battaglia degli Altipiani}, or the *Frühjahrs offensive*, between the Italian and Austro-Hungarian armies from mid-May to near the end of June 1916, which left 230,000 dead, injured, missing or taken prisoner – tr. note.]

jus sanguinis [nationality defined by parentage]: one has rights only in so far as one's roots are firmly planted not only in the soil but in the blood of the country, with a dangerous slippage towards a conception of belonging to the nation that, if not racist, is to say the least exclusiveist. This aspect did not escape Gramsci and when, in March 1917, the League produced a single-number publication "La Riscossa italica", he pointed to a curious incongruity: the adjective "Italic" has a value "essentially of race", with a meaning that is different from "Italian". The Romans were "Italic", as were the Oscans and the Umbrians, but the Celts were not and neither were the Jews; but many of the members of the League were instead Semitic, and by exalting the virtues of the Italic lineage, became ridiculous, since if Italy were still only Italic, in other words under Roman domination, they would be slaves with no rights.³²

Among the authors of the League's single-number issue was a Lycée teacher, Arnaldo Monti, who in summer 1917 would create a student organization in favour of the war and the national idea, in practice authorizing middle-school students to rebel against those whom, of their teachers, they considered pro-German. Gramsci's criticism was that, in this way, school life would be reduced to a continual abuse of power, with the institution of a veritable tyranny of the worst elements, who would be able to justify their laziness because of the evil nature of the textbooks. The Italian school would be "stenterellized" and cease to be an intelligent collaboration between youth and adults.³³

It did not escape his notice that, behind the League's claim to represent "the most genuine Italian tradition", there often lurked an economic interest:

[...] the anti-Germanism of these Stenterellos has special characteristics, special tendencies which pay more attention to solid factors than their nature of airy-fairy poets would suggest: they want economic measures that would allow traders of all types to obtain a generous protectionist recompense for the cheap

³² *Stenterello risponde* (*Stenterello replies*), "Avanti!", 14 march 1917, pp. 183-4. (See CF 1982, cit., pp. 89-90.)

³³ *La scuola di Stenterello* (*The School of Stenterello*), *ibid.*, 15 June 1917, pp. 330-34. New attribution.

sales goods with which they are pretending to play their part in the blood tribute that the proletarian soldiers are forced into paying to the fatherland.³⁴

To obtain a similar goal, it was necessary to instil into Italians the conviction that the Germans are a people of abject individuals, who deserve to be banished from humankind, closed up “behind a barrier of fire and tariff walls so that they will end up by tearing themselves to pieces”. The denunciation of these machinations becomes “a moral question”.³⁵ Indeed, for Gramsci those who “stuff your brain” forget to say that Italy is a poor country, where the consumers have little purchasing power, but in any case they have to buy for the necessities of modern life. It was, therefore, useful that there were nations such as Germany, specialized in the production of cheap goods: commercial relations were convenient both for the Italians and for the Germans since, economically speaking, the good and the bad are “profit and loss” and we are dealing with “concepts in economics, not in sentiments”.³⁶

The question again came back, in the polemic against the League, of the nature and condemnation of sentimentalism as the moving force for action. The interventionists introduced into economic questions elements of sentiment that gave rise to upheavals, bringing individuals to “that pitch of frenetic nationalism and mental confusion necessary for self-enslavement”.³⁷ Even tourism was considered shameful: Italians had to feel humiliated through the arrival every year of crowds of foreign visitors admiring the natural and artistic beauties of the country, leaving their money as “an alms”. But the truth was that this was a form of reverse exportation: instead of buying Italian goods in their own country, foreigners came directly to Italy to consume them. In the limit, the shame consisted in the servile way in which visitors were treated. This servile attitude was however “not an economic, but a moral fact”, and could be overcome by teaching the

³⁴ *Stenterello frigna* (*Stenterello Snivels*), *ibid.*, 20 March 1917, pp. 189-91. (See CF 1982, *cit.*, pp. 94-6 for previously published version, not however containing these lines.)

³⁵ *Spezzatino di asino e contorno* (*Donkey Stew with Vegetables*), *ibid.*, 24 April 1917, pp. 248-50. (See CF 1982, *cit.*, pp. 143-6.)

³⁶ Argiropulo, *Il perfido straniero* [*The Perfidious Foreigner*], “Il Grido del popolo”, XXII, no. 672, 9 June 1917, pp. 321-3. (See CF 1982, *cit.*, pp. 195-7.)

³⁷ *Ibid.*

Italians that they were necessary to foreigners and vice versa “the dignity of each is formed by this mutual necessity”.³⁸

While the interventionists were free to organize public lectures, socialists could only come together in private meetings, with a restricted number of listeners, often interrupted by the “police officer”, who became the “supreme judge” of public life in Italy, and whose harassment Gramsci never tired of denouncing during the entire period of the war.³⁹ If the forces of order hindered the freedom of movement and the censorship struck at that of thought, this did not mean that the working-class movement did not carry on developing, as its class adversaries hoped. On the contrary, events that do not leave any direct evidence of themselves “have the best possible evidence when they flow out manifestly in a supreme effect and realize themselves in this effect”.⁴⁰

Patriotic rhetoric affected even the theatre. In his role as critic for “Avanti!”, Gramsci followed various plays in which the world conflict became the instrument for moral redemption of characters who, in the blood of the trenches finally learn the meaning of courage and altruism. In actual fact

War, morally, does not lead one to becoming generous, or villainous, since it may lead to one or the other, and it is not yet decided which will be more numerous of these products, not of the war, but of reflections, judgments, exasperations, enthusiasms that the war has helped to strengthen or liquefy, according to men, to their moral preparation, to their human preparation.⁴¹

In addition, in Turin vaudeville shows were more and more frequent, intended to provide spectators with mere popular entertainment, at the expense of more serious and elaborated-on works “useful for the esthetic education” of the public. Gramsci maintained

³⁸ *L'industria del forestiero* [*The Tourist Industry*], “Il Grido del popolo”, XXII, no. 675, 29 June 1917, pp. 353-54. (See CF 1982, cit., pp. 230-1.)

³⁹ “Umanitari” (“Humanitarians”), “Avanti!”, 27 March 1917, pp. 203-4. (See CF 1982, cit., pp. 99-101.)

⁴⁰ *La maschera e il volto* (*The Mask and the Face*), *ibid.*, 14 January 1917, pp. 27-28. (See CT 1980, cit., pp. 699-700.)

⁴¹ “L’elevazione” di E. Bernstein all’Alfieri [*“The Consecration” of E[nrico] {Henri} Bernstein at the Alfieri Theatre*], *ibid.*, 28 November 1917, pp. 609-10. (See CT 1982, cit., pp. 948-9.)

that this phenomenon could be traced to the Chiarella brothers' Trust, formed with the sole scope of ensuring box-office takings in the many theatres that they controlled.⁴² Thus it happened that where "the most vulgar smuttiness" was served up, the public flocked in, while for a concert of the talented Polish pianist Helena Morsztyn [Morsztyn-ówna], who played pieces by Beethoven and Chopin, managing to translate "the beauty, power and authority, the pain" of their works, the concert hall was deserted. Gramsci was convinced that while the bourgeoisie snubbed these two great composers because their music was "like a tempest sweeping aside and overwhelming all baseness of the soul", if the proletarians had the money to spend on a concert, they would know how to appreciate and follow "faithfully and passionately" such a good interpreter as Morsztyn.⁴³

2. In 1917, Gramsci continued to use the column "*Sotto la mole*" to analyse the changes that the war had brought about in the economic, social and moral life of the country, filtering them through the lenses of Turin. Many of his often ferociously sarcastic articles, were directed against the representatives of the liberal majority on the city council, led by the mayor, Teofilo Rossi, of Rossi Vermouth fame, which showed itself to be insensitive to the sufferings that the working population had been undergoing since the start of the war.

One of Gramsci's favourite targets was Costanzo Rinaudo, the council executive member in charge of finances, one of whose tasks was to ensure that the rich Turin bourgeoisie paid into the municipal coffers the family tax introduced in November 1915 to take account of the increased city expenditure after Italian intervention in the war.⁴⁴ On obtaining the documentation on the amount paid by Rinaudo himself, Gramsci was surprised by the paucity of the sum, given that Rinaudo had several incomes, and therefore held that the suspicion that "the magistrate who ought to have been the guardian of the

⁴² *L'industria teatrale*, *ibid.*, 28 June 1917, pp. 348-50. (CF 1982, cit., pp. 911-3.)

⁴³ Helena Morsztyn, *ibid.*, pp. 161-4. New Attribution.

⁴⁴ See *ASCT, Atti Municipali (Turin Commune Historical Archive, Municipal Legislation)*, 26 November 1915 session.

municipal assets, is in actual fact their chief robber” was in fact well-founded. The far-from-slight consequence stemming from this was that, in violating the law, Rinaudo was compelled to allow others, too, to ignore it. Gramsci accused the Turin bourgeoisie of not being conscious of its own duties; the sums not paid each year as local taxes were recouped by making the “humble citizens” pay who thus had to “make sacrifices and give up the necessities”.⁴⁵ In addition, despite higher interests and the exceptional nature of the situation, highlighted with insistent rhetoric, the Council executive did not shine for rapidity in the collection of local taxes, fearful of losing support in the small business sector, whose vote had been decisive for its electoral victory in June 1914. Beyond doubt, the Commune was working in a difficult context, marked by a rapid rise in population due to the arrival of immigrants from other parts of Italy for employment in the war industries, as well as the presence of refugees, wounded soldiers, and military personnel passing through. The end result was that the demand for goods of prime necessity was greater than the supply, leading to a sharp price rise, but the Rossi Executive long delayed any market regulation, introducing price restrictions on foodstuffs only at the end of 1916.⁴⁶

Gramsci commented that their effectiveness was however limited, since for the most part the small business people tended in all ways to evade it. He went on to say that there had been repeated cases in which proletarian women, who had gone to the carabinieri to lodge a complaint against shopkeepers who were refusing to sell them a price-capped good unless they also bought something else, were brutally thrown out and their protest ignored.⁴⁷

In June 1917 the shopkeepers, on their side, formed a limited company which quickly grew to a thousand members so as to defend the interests of their category.⁴⁸ Those who suffered most were the

⁴⁵ *Per un omaggio al Prof. Costanzo Rinaudo (A Tribute to Prof. Costanzo Rinaudo)*, “Avanti!”, 26 January 1917, p. 56.

⁴⁶ Cf. R. Rugafiori, *Nella Grande Guerra*, in *Storia di Torino. VIII. Dalla Grande Guerra alla Liberazione (1914-1945)* (*In the Great War, in History of Turin. VIII. From the Great War to the Liberation (1914-1945)*), Torino, Einaudi, 9 vols., pp. 7-104 (esp. pp. 42-43).

⁴⁷ Cf. *Tutti fanno il loro dovere (Everyone does their duty)*, “Avanti!”, 22 February 1917, p. 131. (CF 1982, pp. 49-50.)

⁴⁸ Cf. Rugafiori, cit., p. 46.

small shopkeepers, forced to take account both with the price-caps and with the pressure to raise prices coming from the wholesalers. Gramsci effectively grasped the unease of the retailers, the “*Monssù Botegari*”, who wanted to retain a profit margin necessary for keeping a family and declared that this figure represented “one of the wreckages” left behind by history, and that this role could be better fulfilled in the general interest by other social bodies such as the cooperatives.⁴⁹ In Turin in particular the Cooperative Alliance represented “a colossal instrument of economic emancipation”, showing that it could fulfill just such a collective initiative even under a bourgeois regime. Though immersed in a hostile environment, it could become a “factor of history” and be directed towards higher aims of political struggle.⁵⁰ Indeed, already in 1916, Gramsci had compared the cooperatives to the first capitalist aggregations that had caused a rent in feudalism. They did therefore have a revolutionary value and by increasing in number and size, they constituted weapons against the bourgeois regime; the more numerous they were, the easier it was to overcome “the terrible crisis” that would accompany the passage from one social order to the other.⁵¹

Despite the fact that the socialist cooperatives were working well, even in Turin the food situation tended to worsen in the course of 1917: while the population continued to increase, there was a heavy reduction of consumption, with serious problems for the weaker sectors. It became necessary to introduce ration cards for some goods, and yet again Gramsci denounced the delay in the city administration’s action: in the case of sugar, the ration card was introduced in February 1917 after two years of continual rises in price of this commodity, thereby bringing about a polarization in consumption in favour of the rich classes, for whom the cost of a good is “a secondary factor”. They had, at their ease, been able to stock up on precious foodstuffs and the

⁴⁹ Raksha, *Monssù Botegari* [*M’sieur Shopkeeper*], “Il Grido del popolo”, XXII, n. 651, 13 January 1917, pp. 24-26. (CT 1980, cit., pp. 696-8.)

⁵⁰ *La prova* (*The proof*), “Avanti!”, 29 September 1917 and “Il Grido del Popolo”, XXII, n. 688, 29 September 1917, pp. 499-500.

⁵¹ Alfa Gamma, *Socialismo e cooperazione*, “L’Alleanza Cooperativa”, X, n. 116, 30 October 1916. (CT 1980, cit., pp. 600-3.)

introduction of rationing was of no worry in any way.⁵² Gramsci further accused Rossi of having used his position as mayor to guarantee the quantity of sugar necessary for his firm's alcoholic drinks production and of having transformed Turin "into a money-spinning fiefdom of his family", indicating it to be a veritable "model of character perversion", on which all who wished for a better Italy should reflect.⁵³

However, in June 1917, even an experienced politician such as this vermouth industrialist was, made a mistake. During a public demonstration, giving vent to his feelings and saying he was tired of the war, he exclaimed that Giolitti was more than ever in the hearts of the Italians, and attacked all the interventionist sectors, and was forced to resign. He was succeeded by the senior member of the Executive, Leopoldo Usseglio, who administered the city with the same lack of diligence as his predecessor as regards local taxes, but at the end of July the situation took a sudden turn for the worse, due to the worst grain shortage since the beginning of the war. For two successive weeks the women were forced to run from one shop to another forming long queues in front of the bakeries in their search for bread. On 22 August, the consumers were so exasperated that veritable riots broke out: the upheaval quickly turned into a violent protest against the world war, going on for several days and when the movement died down the balance sheet was fifty dead, hundreds of wounded and thousands of demonstrators arrested.⁵⁴ Even if here it was a case of spontaneous agitation, arrest warrants were issued against almost all the local socialist leaders. Gramsci became a member of the provisional committee that took over leadership of the Turin section and became the de facto editor of the "Grido del Popolo".⁵⁵

⁵² *Le tessere e la favola del furbo* (Ration Cards and the Rogue's Tale), "Avanti!", 28 February 1917, pp. 144-46. (CF 1982, cit., pp. 62-5.) [Gramsci refers in this article to *Der Gescheite Hans* {Clever Hans}, the tale collected by the Brothers Grimm which he later translated in prison: cf. the review article by Birgit Wagner in this number of the IGJ – editorial note.]

⁵³ *De profundis*, *ibid.*, 12 June 1917, pp. 327-9. (CF 1982, cit., pp. 205-6.)

⁵⁴ Cf. A. Monticone, *Gli italiani in uniforme. 1915-1918. Intellettuali, borghesi e disertatori* [Italians in Uniform. 1915-1918. Intellectuals, Civilians and Deserters], Bari, Laterza, 1972, pp. 89-144.

⁵⁵ Cf. Paolo Spriano, *Storia di Torino operaio e socialista. Da De Amicis a Gramsci* [History of Working-class and Socialist Turin. From De Amicis to Gramsci], Torino, Einaudi, 1958, pp. 416-31.

The interventionist press was at one in considering socialist propaganda as the real cause of the insurrection and Gramsci forcefully defended the workers who had gone out into the streets. Enemy slanders could not attack “moral purity”, and they proudly proceeded along their path of suffering and sacrifices.⁵⁶ Rather, by rejecting the accusations of anti-patriotism, he declared that if a seed of national consciousness existed among the popular strata, the merit belonged precisely to socialism: after unification of the country, Italy was composed of millions of individuals who lived scattered over the national territory and whose world was restricted to the bell tower of their own village. This localism had been overcome thanks to socialist propaganda: the proletarians had developed a solidarity with other men who found themselves in the same conditions, for which learning to read and write in the same language had become a vital need for exchanging ideas and hopes. The birth and growth of the PSI had marked for Italy a “new Renaissance”, that of the poorest strata: no other group had given rise to a similar phenomenon rather, on the contrary, the liberal rulers had “cut” the country up “piecemeal” into many areas, at loggerheads with one another, and created artificial antagonisms through protectionist policies.⁵⁷

An immediate criticism of the conduct of the Turin socialists came from leaders of the right in the PSI, such as Claudio Treves, who launched into a veritable harangue against the revolutionaries. Tracing an analogy between the war and the class struggle, he claimed that in both cases it was possible to adopt different strategies: either attack the enemy or wait on the defensive for the enemies to wear themselves out. The reformists were for the second solution “and the sterility” of the Turin revolts showed that it was not possible to obtain appreciable results through different systems. For the revolutionaries, instead, what counted was “to act *in order to do something*”; they were under the illusion that an active minority could “dictate law to the world” but, in

⁵⁶ *Il signor Conte Delfino Orsi*, *ibid.*, pp. 423-6.

⁵⁷ *Il socialismo e l'Italia*, “Il Grido del Popolo”, XXII, n. 687, 22 September 1917, pp. 481-4. (CF 1982, *cit.*, pp. 349-52.)

actual fact, insurrections served no purpose other than to sow struggle and sacrifice to no avail the most willing.⁵⁸

Gramsci's reply revealed a conception of the party and its relation with the masses that is totally different. He distanced himself from Treves's vision, in which men's lives become a huge chessboard on which the pieces are moved according to a precise strategy, "sure in advance of success or lack of it", and where will is considered positively when it gives up, while it has negative connotations if it assumes the initiative. The reformist Treves had constructed the image of a proletarian army composed of private soldiers and a restricted number of officers and non-commissioned officers who constitute the party. Even if in the situation after the war, Gramsci himself, in referring to working-class organization, frequently made a comparison with the army, at this time he refused the idea of a real hierarchy between leaders and the masses:

The socialists are not the officers of the proletarian army, they are part of the proletariat itself, they are perhaps its consciousness, but as a consciousness cannot be severed from an individual, so the socialists cannot be put in a dual relationship with the proletariat. They are one, always one, and do not command, but live with the proletariat, like the blood circulates and moves within the veins of a body and cannot be made to live and move within rubber tubes rolled up around a corpse.

In the conditions created by the war, the greatest success that the proletariat could reach is that of the "demonstration of its existence".⁵⁹

Gramsci in his turn accused the reformists of having reduced class solidarity to a spirit "of corporation and locality", neglecting the fact that the well-being conquered by restricted working-class aristocracies was translated into poverty "for an enormous majority" of poor proletarians. Thus, if a comparison is made between the reformists' mode of action and that of the revolutionaries, it is the former who emerge defeated: revolutionism overcomes particularisms and is "an integral consciousness of all of life's problems, the current ones, the

⁵⁸ Claudio Treves, *Antica predica* [Ancient Sermon], "Critica Sociale", XXVII, n. 17, 1-15 September 1917, pp. 217-9.

⁵⁹ *Analogie e metafore*, "Il Grido del Popolo", XXII, n. 686, 15 September 1917, pp. 464-6. (CF 182, cit., pp. 331-3.)

immediate ones and those of the future”. It cannot consider the mass as a “pupil”, but as the maker of its history, “itself a judge” of the means through which it attains its goals.⁶⁰

The reaction that followed the actions in Turin, declared a “war zone” on 18 September,⁶¹ more and more convinced the reformists of the necessity to support a moderate government, near to the needs of the people. They thought in particular of the return to power of Giolitti who, a few days before the Turin uprising, had made a speech with very advanced contents, declaring that the soldiers and workers, after all their sufferings in the war, had the right to demand measures imbued with greater social justice and the ruling classes had the duty to meet these demands.⁶²

In Gramsci’s view, the old liberal leader was simply exploiting the climate of confusion and expectation generated by the world conflagration in order to return to being a protagonist of political life.⁶³ In reality, it was he who had given the country its “most fraudulent” governments and a collaborationist attitude would alienate the sympathy of a very great number of Italians, who had now come to consider the PSI a “spiritual centre”. The socialists were going through a crucial moment, because they could become everything, just as they could become nothing: “Giolitti too is an adversary, perhaps at this moment the adversary most to be feared”.⁶⁴

3. Among the first initiatives that Gramsci undertook after having become editor of the “Grido del Popolo” was the publication in October of a special number on protectionism, in which he claimed that the struggle against tariffs was “a reaction against the causes that have contributed to bring about the war” and represented “the assertion of an desire for human solidarity”, aiming at abolishing

⁶⁰ La “*Giustizia*” (“*Justice*”), *ibid.*, n. 690, 13 October 1917, pp. 536-8. (CF 1982, cit., pp. 390-2.)

⁶¹ Cf. Paolo Spriano, *History of Working-class Turin*, cit., p. 442.

⁶² Cf. G. Giolitti, *Discorsi extraparlamentari* (*Speeches outside Parliament*), with an introductory essay by N. Valeri, Torino, Einaudi, 1952, pp. 289-91.

⁶³ Cf. *Assicurazione alla vita* (*Life assurance*), “*Avanti!*”, 16 August 1917. (CF 1982, cit., pp. 278-80.)

⁶⁴ *I fatti di Torino al Parlamento nel discorso dell'onorevole Casalini* (*The actions in Turin before Parliament in the Speech of the Hon. Casalini*), “*Il Grido del Popolo*”, XXII, n. 692, 27 October 1917, pp. 563-4. (CF 1982, cit., pp. 410-12.)

hatred among peoples, and favouring the advent of “of a broader and deeper brotherhood among nations”.⁶⁵

A few weeks before this, reflecting on the causes that bring about conflicts, he noted how they were linked to the capitalist system of production, such that they could be considered a “bourgeois fatefulness”, an expression that is not however to be understood literally – since otherwise there would be a permanent state of war between nations – but “in the idealistic sense”, as the interpretation of a necessity. War exists as a potentiality, but becomes concrete when a bourgeois group decides that the moment has come to unleash one, in order to win or defend a privilege. Gramsci emphasized the fact that the real problem is the indifference of the many, since those who take it upon themselves “not to allow knots to accumulate, which then need a sword to cut through them” are few. Indeed there are those who continually work to create conflicts: these are the “professionals of war”, the ones who veritably “sow the seeds of panic”, who seek to stir up hatred among nations since, in a war there are always those who obtain huge rewards, while for the collectivity there is only the loss of loved ones and ruin. He recalled that before 1914, it frequently happened that in all countries, the newspapers that were linked to the armament manufacturers published news of war projects on the part of rival powers and demanded adequate counter-measures. In Britain the talk was of German zeppelins flying over the eastern cities, and it was the same case in Germany right up to the news, completely fake, that Nuremberg had been bombed by the French, in this way gaining popular support for the war. Socialists had to try and expand their movement, in order as soon as possible to replace the dominant class in power and at the same time they had the task of exercising control over those bourgeois groups “who create the decisive hours”:

The second task integrates the first one: it is not enough to be against war in general, just as it is not enough to declare oneself generically socialist. One must try to avoid war concretely thwarting all the tricks, thwarting all the plots of the panic mongers, of the paid hacks of the war industry, of the hacks who are demanding tariff barriers for the economic war. Since it is even necessary for war

⁶⁵ *I socialisti per la libertà doganale* (*The socialists for freedom from tariffs*), *ibid.*, 20 October 1917, pp. 552-54. (CF 1982, cit., pp. 402-5.)

to break out at a certain moment, what one must do is ensure that this moment never arrives.

The majority of the people, still extraneous to the ideals of socialism, easily let themselves be deceived by the “sirens”: it was the task of the PSI to “throw over bourgeois society the net of their control” to stop in future another, and such an enormous, destruction of lives and riches.⁶⁶

Gramsci considered that it was especially in the sphere of international economic relations that socialists should undertake such an action of control, fighting to obtain policies that reduced the reasons for conflict to a minimum. For this reason it was decided to publish a special number against protectionism, using again some of the arguments in favour of economic liberalism that had already been expressed in the summer of 1916.⁶⁷ However, while at this time, he had supported the economic and moral reasons that free traders and socialists could share, now he was underlining the fact that the PSI was pursuing its own ends in this fight, bound up with the realization of its maximum programme:

On the way in which [the tariff problem] is resolved depends the possibility or not of developing the spontaneous forces of production possessed by each country and therefore of hastening or delaying that economic maturity which is an essential basis for the advent of socialism; on this depends the sharpening of the rivalry that today is keeping various nations divided or the creation of more intimate relations that will bring about the passage from the national to the international.

The main reason for which the proletarians had to challenge protectionism was that, as well as fomenting wars, it delayed the attainment of the economic conditions necessary for the advent of the revolution.⁶⁸ In consequence, Gramsci opposed any attempt to change

⁶⁶ A. G., *Il canto delle sirene* (*The Sirens' Song*), *ibid.*, n. 688, 6 October 1917 and “Avanti!”, 10 October 1917, pp. 521-7. (CF 1982, *cit.*, pp. 382-7.)

⁶⁷ See *Contro il feudalismo economico* (*Against Economic Feudalism*), “Il Grido del Popolo”, XXI, n. 628, 5 August 1916; Argiropoulos, *Contro il feudalismo economico*, *ibid.*, 12 August 1916; *Contro il feudalismo economico, Perché il libero scambio non è popolare* (*Against Economic Feudalism. Why Free Trade is not Popular*), *ibid.*, n. 630, 19 August 1916. (See CF 1982, *cit.*, pp. 471, 480-2 and 497-8 respectively.)

⁶⁸ *The socialists for freedom from tariffs*, *cit.*

that law of free competition that characterized the private property regime and whose full application favoured the attainment of the most developed form of capitalism. His economic liberalism was not, then, a form of condescension towards models of bourgeois culture – an accusation launched at him at that time by some comrades of the socialist section and later taken up by some historians – but together with intransigence was part and parcel of a strategy aiming at radicalizing class antagonism.⁶⁹

He was therefore in opposition not only to protectionism but also to public intervention in the economy. Already in “La Città futura” he had made a number of observations regarding state interference on the part of the two main belligerents, Britain and Germany, shortly before the war. In 1909 Lloyd George had proposed a draft land reform bill that attacked big land ownership, redistributing the land if it were badly cultivated; in the German empire in 1913 the majority of the socialists had voted in for an increase in military spending, since the costs would be covered by a tax on big incomes. In Gramsci’s view, these measures represented a form of “bourgeois state socialism” which, far from attacking the power of the bourgeoisie, increased it since they ensured that in those countries, the proletariat would conduct the class struggle without going to excess, since it would feel itself protected by the government.⁷⁰

However, with the protraction of the war, the Italian state, too, grew and expanded its functions through a congeries of committees and offices that intervened directly in economic and financial activity, leading to a partial suspension of market dynamics. A number of the reformists followed the development of this phenomenon with interest: Treves observed that forms of a collectivist order were being created, which represented an “incontrovertible documentation of the bankruptcy of individualism” and were of value as examples, “albeit

⁶⁹ Among the main supporters of the existence of a liberal phase in Gramsci are to be found Giuseppe Bergami, *Il giovane Gramsci e il marxismo. 1911-1918* (*The Young Gramsci and Marxism. 1911-1918*), Milano, Feltrinelli 1977; and Domenico Losurdo, *Antonio Gramsci dal liberalismo al comunismo critico* (*Antonio Gramsci from Liberalism to Critical Communism*), Roma, Gamberetti, 1997.

⁷⁰ *Tre principi, tre ordini* (*Three Principles, Three Orders*), “La Città futura”, 11 February 1917, pp. 84-92. (CF 1982, cit., pp. 5-12.)

material and rough-and-ready” ones, of the exercise of a communist economy.⁷¹

Gramsci distanced himself from similar positions, maintaining that in Italy, since unification, the State represented “the citizens’ main enemy”: any growth in its powers coincided with a rise in the poverty of individuals and brought about “a general lowering of public, economic and moral living standards”. The monopolies, introduced during the war, served only to “maintain intact the privilege of restricted categories of which the State is a prisoner”.⁷²

The young revolutionary did not limit himself to denouncing the weaknesses and the anomalies present in the State apparatus, but attempted to draw attention to the main reasons for its backwardness. In his view these stemmed from the process of national unification for which he had already, by 1917, begun to sketch out a critical approach, with reference to Engels’ distinction between an economic class and a historical one: an economic class is transformed into a historical one when it passes from the terrain of production to the political one of the superstructure, in other words the path that a class must follow in order to become the organizing element of a society. The Italian bourgeoisie subtracted itself from this law, and created a State without having reached an adequate economic development over the whole of the national territory. The absence of clear and rectilinear programmes in the various political parties of the dominant class depended on the fact that this class had never been a real class of producers, but an “assembly of shabby politicians”.⁷³

Things began to change with the advent of the nationalist movement. In late 1917 Gramsci realized that the arguments put forward by Corradini and his allies found a correspondence in the interests of certain capitalist strata, who saw in nationalism their political party, “the theoretician of their needs and their aspirations”.⁷⁴

⁷¹ Claudio Treves, *Maggio nel sangue (May in the Blood)*, “Critica sociale”, XXV, n. 9, 1-15 May 1915, pp. 129-31.

⁷² *Lo Stato e l'utile dei cittadini (The State and the Citizens' Assets)*, “Avanti!”, 8 April 1917, pp. 225-7. (CF 1982, cit., pp. 118-24.)

⁷³ *Per chiarire le idee sul riformismo borghese (To Clarify Ideas on the Reformism of the Bourgeoisie)*, *ibid.*, 11 December 1917, pp. 642-64. (CF 1982, cit., pp. 481-3.)

⁷⁴ *Il riformismo borghese (The Reformism of the Bourgeoisie)*, *ibid.*, 5 December 1917, pp. 629-31. (CF 1982, cit., pp. 470-2.)

The aggregation of individual categories of producers on a clear and concrete programme constituted the rise of the bourgeoisie “as a combative and conscious body”. Since, however, this process was only at the beginning, Gramsci considered that it was normal for the bourgeoisie to embrace the nationalist economic programme, in practice meaning protectionism, aimed at safeguarding particular interests, and established an affinity between nationalist ideology and socialist reformism, considering that the two doctrines were immature and retrograde, typical of a stage of development that had halted at the level of corporativism. The nationalists were “the paladins of the ‘rights’ of the bourgeois corporations”, just as many reformists identified a single category of workers with the whole of the proletariat, for whom they tried to obtain benefits. When the bourgeoisie went beyond the corporative stage, it would realize that liberalism was the real class doctrine, the only one that would tend to a welding together of the various national bourgeoisies and would lead to a growth of global capitalist wealth through free trade.⁷⁵

Analogously, the real doctrine of the proletariat was not reformism, but revolutionary socialism, destined to grow rapidly, because with the prolongation of the war favoured the reawakening from indifference of the great masses, those who had always remained at the margins of political struggle and essentially extraneous to Marxist propaganda. These multitudes felt a vivid desire to put an end to a regime that had made possible such a long and bloody conflict as the one then taking place: in the days before the Turin uprisings, Gramsci had observed the long queues of women in front of the bakers’ shops, and written that the unease was corroding “the instinctive and sheep-like confidence of the indifferent”, and that the reawakening regarded the deepest strata of social passivity.⁷⁶ During the rout at Caporetto, he emphasized that the entry of the masses into history represented the most important new factor produced by the conflict and that the phenomenon was irreversible:

⁷⁵ *Per chiarire le idee sul riformismo borghese*, cit.

⁷⁶ *L’orologiaio* (*The Watchmaker*), “Avanti!”, 13 August 1917 and “Il Grido del Popolo”, XXII, n. 682, 18 August 1917, pp. 410-12. (CF 1982, cit., pp. 281-3.)

Three years of war have produced the effect that the supporters of war were very far from having seen. They have shifted a whole number of men who before the war were distant from the political struggle, distant from social life. These men now feel needs that before they did not feel, vague and indistinct needs, not made concrete in a programme.⁷⁷

In the post-WWI period, the thought of how to manage and insert these multitudes into a socialist organization was to become Gramsci's overriding preoccupation.

Meanwhile, the rout and invasion of the national territory decreed the end of the Boselli government and led to the formation of a new ministry under Vittorio Emanuele Orlando. In those days of tension and expectation, with the fear that the enemy might shortly arrive in Milan, Turati and Treves convinced themselves of the need to infuse the soldiers with a sense of confidence, so as to take up the combat again. The efforts of the two culminated in the article *Proletariato e Resistenza*, in which they argued that when the fatherland is oppressed, everyone felt "the firm will to fight, to resist to the utmost" since, with the advance of the enemy, at stake were the institutions of democracy and the freedoms that were of use to the proletariat "still more than to the bourgeoisie".⁷⁸ A few days later, on 14 November, the parliamentary socialist group, composed in the main by reformists, voted in agreement with the rest of the Chamber in favour of a motion which proclaimed national concord and the fusion of all possible energies to oppose foreign occupation.⁷⁹

Dissenting voices from the revolutionary wing of the PSI were regularly suppressed by the censorship and since the official party congress was cancelled, the intransigent fraction decided to organize a clandestine meeting in Florence on 18 November. Costantino Lazzari and Giacinto Menotti Serrati took part for the party Leadership together with around forty delegates from the most important

⁷⁷ *Di chi è la colpa? (Who is to Blame?)*, "Il Grido del Popolo", XXII, n. 695, 17 November 1917, pp. 588-90. (CF 1982, cit., pp. 444-5.)

⁷⁸ Filippo Turati – Claudio Treves, *Proletariato e Resistenza (Proletariat and Resistance)*, "Critica sociale" XXVII, n. 21, 1-15 November, 1917, p. 265.

⁷⁹ See L. Ambrosoli, *Né aderire, né sabotare (Neither support nor sabotage)*, Milano, Edizioni Avanti!, 1961, pp. 254-6.

sections, amongst whom there were Bordiga and Gramsci.⁸⁰ In the course of the meeting it was emphasized that socialism must aim at the revolutionary overthrow of bourgeois society, without however providing any concrete guideline to the proletariat: simply, the manifestations of solidarity expressed by the reformists were condemned. Bordiga's advice was to act immediately, because the proletariat was armed and the State disorganized, but the majority of those present, including Lazzari and Serrati, preferred to remain anchored to the line that had been established in May 1915, summarized in the "neither support not sabotage" formula, maintaining that the Party's attitude could not depend on fluctuating military outcomes.⁸¹

In Florence, Gramsci was in agreement with Bordiga's thesis regarding the opportunity of an active intervention by the proletariat in the crisis and, like his young Neapolitan comrade, felt disappointed by the insufficiency of the leading group.⁸² However, Gramsci was not yet thinking of a conquest of power in the short run: indeed, a few days before the meeting in Florence, he wrote an article in favour of a Constituent Assembly, an idea launched by the democratic interventionists after the military rout, with the aim of obtaining mass consensus for the war. He claimed that convening a Constituent Assembly would allow the political and economic freedoms that typified a bourgeois regime, but which in Italy were still absent, and would favour the realization of a "precise definition of the social forces" that had come into being in the previous three years. In their turn, these would give a measure of the conditions under which the class struggle could be waged, "until the moment when economic reality has become such as to allow the advent of socialism".⁸³

⁸⁰ Cf. Paolo Spriano, *Storia del partito Comunista. I. Da Bordiga a Gramsci (History of the Communist Party. I. From Bordigs to Gramsci)*, Torino, Einaudi, 1967, 5 vols., p. 4.

⁸¹ See: Giovanni Germanetto, *Souvenirs d'un parruquier*, Paris, Bureau d'éditions, 1931, p. 113 [in English *Memoirs of a barber*, New York, International Publishers, trans. Edmund Stevens, no date but 1931, pp. 131-43 for the conference and p. 136 for the mention of Bordiga's speech], and *Intervento all'Esecutivo allargato dell'Esecutivo dell'Internazionale comunista del novembre 1922* in A. Gramsci, *Socialismo e fascismo. L'Ordine Nuovo 1921-1922*, Torino, Einaudi, 1978, p. 449.

⁸² Cf. Paolo Spriano, *History of the Communist Party*, cit., p. 4.

⁸³ *Who is to Blame?*, cit.

Once he had returned to Turin, Gramsci wrote a long piece on the weaknesses he saw in the Socialist Party. His criticism was directed against the reformists, but also involved the revolutionaries, equally unable to foresee the course of events: “either they were giving too much importance to the current situation, to the facts, or they paid no attention to them”. One could not proceed in the same way as before, since now “the enormous multitude” that the war had brought to the light of history, expected a new order from socialism. He therefore argued that it was necessary to begin a work of “intensification of moral life”, judging the proposal advanced in “Avanguardia” by Bordiga for a revision in theory of the methods and programmes of the party to be insufficient, since the errors committed did not in fact depend on the formulas, but on the fact that these formulas had remained as something inanimate, not experienced internally. It was therefore “necessary that we ourselves should change, that our method of action should change” and with this aim he considered it useful to create a new institution, an organ of culture that could promote and intensify discussions “outside any political and economic contingency”.⁸⁴ The new association was to deal with “everything that interests or could one day interest the proletarian movement”, even dealing with philosophical, religious and ethical problems, in the conviction that socialism is “an integral vision of life”, with its own philosophy and its own morals. On the one hand, it was to provide a solution to the problem of the intellectuals, who within the movement were not fulfilling a task that was adequate to their abilities; on the other hand, it would resolve the problem of having to take decisions in haste, with the result that militants ended by accepting choices not through inner conviction but on the basis of confidence in their leaders.⁸⁵

Gramsci’s aim was to introduce greater democracy inside the party, so as to help make good the structural weaknesses of the socialist apparatus, much more marked than when the reformists handed the helm over to the revolutionaries in 1912. From that point, there had

⁸⁴ A.G., *Lecture (Readings)*, “Il Grido del Popolo”, XXII, n. 696, 24 November 1917, pp. 593-6 (CF 1982, cit., pp. 452-5). For Bordiga’s position on a renewal of the PSI, see Giovanna Savant, *Bordiga, Gramsci e la Grande Guerra*, cit., pp. 175-6.

⁸⁵ *Per un’associazione di cultura*, cit. “Avanti!”, 18 December 1917.

been a series of episodes of “Bonapartism”, the last of which was that of Mussolini, in whom the relation between the masses and the leaders was of a charismatic type, based on the authority and prestige of the chief.⁸⁶

The proposal to create a cultural organ gave rise to a wide-ranging debate in the columns of “Avanti!”, but while it obtained the approval of a number of workers, it did not in actual practice find any following. Gramsci noted that those who were opposed to the project had a mistaken conception of culture, and were of the opinion that it meant simply “knowing something of everything”, while it was instead “thinking well, whatever one thinks, and therefore work well, whatever one does”. What counted was not the master’s speech to the disciples, as in the case of the Popular University, but “the minute work of discussion of investigation into problems, in which all take part”, everyone making a contribution and in which all were, at the same time, masters and disciples.⁸⁷

In the name of this Socratic concept of culture, at the end of 1917 together with some of the comrades of the Turin section, Gramsci created a Club for Moral Life, whose aim was to accustom young militants to the disinterested discussion of ethical and social problems. In turn members were asked in preparation to read an essay and then outline their thoughts on it to the group, giving rise to a debate that was closed only when everyone present had been able to understand the results of their joint labours. And in addition not only that: each member was invited to make a public pronouncement and be advised by the comrades present, in order to establish an “intellectual and moral communion of everyone”.⁸⁸

⁸⁶ Cf. Leonardo Paggi, *Gramsci e il moderno principe*, cit., pp. 130-6.

⁸⁷ *Filantropia, buona volontà e organizzazione* (*Philanthropy, Good Will and Organization*), “Avanti!”, 24 December 1917, pp. 673-6. (CF 1982, cit., pp. 518-23.)

⁸⁸ Letter to Giuseppe Lombardo Radice, March 1918; in *Edizione nazionale degli scritti di Antonio Gramsci. III. Epistolario. Primo tomo, gennaio 1906-dicembre 1922*, ed. D. Bidussa, F. Giasi, G. Luzzatto Voghera and Maria Luisa Righi, Roma, Istituto dell’Enciclopedia italiana, 2009. (*National Edition of the Writings of Antonio Gramsci. III. Correspondence. Volume One. January 1906-December 1922*). [In English see, e.g., A. Gramsci, *A Great and Terrible World. The Pre-prison Letters*, ed. and trans. Derek Boothman, London, Lawrence and Wishart 2014, pp. 100-101 and notes.] With the departure for the front of some of the members, the group dissolved after a few months.

In the meantime, the conflict within the PSI went on apace, since after the rout at Caporetto, the reformist deputies more than once announced their intention to collaborate with the government. Gramsci intervened in defence of the principle of intransigence, arguing that under no circumstances, however exceptional, should the class struggle be halted:

It is not the proletariat that wants the class struggle, it is a condition of its life, a biological necessity of its life. To give up the class struggle would mean the death of the proletariat, in the absolute sense of the word, because the general conditions of social life are such that no human will can abolish them, except by means of a general suicide.⁸⁹

As regards the problem of discipline, Gramsci noted that since the PSI was composed of many individuals, it was essential that everyone should agree on the end to be attained and the means to be utilized, so that everyone could be asked to observe the rules laid down. Intransigence in action presupposed “tolerance in discussion as natural and necessary”: in the debate there had to be “a fusion of souls and wills”, so that at the moment of action there would be the solidarity and agreement of everyone. Naturally there could be no tolerance of “errors and grave mistakes”. Those who avoided discussion, such as the reformist leaders, irresponsibly put obstacles in the way of establishing norms that were binding for all, and produced uncertain and faltering attitudes, elements which in the long run led to the disintegration of even the most solid social body.⁹⁰

The conflict inside the party reopened the debate on the possibility of an agreement with the anarchists: in the opinion of some of the militants, the new International had also to include the libertarians who, since they shared the principles of internationalism and intransigence, were closer to the revolutionaries than the reformists were.⁹¹ Gramsci, supported by Serrati, forcefully opposed such a possibility:

⁸⁹ *La lotta di classe* (*The Class Struggle*), “Il Grido del popolo”, XXII, n. 697, 1 December 1917, p. 626. (CF 1982, cit., p. 462.)

⁹⁰ A. G., *Intransigenza-tolleranza, intolleranza-transigenza*, *ibid.*, n. 698, 8 December 1917, pp. 637-9. (CF 1982, cit., pp. 480-2.)

⁹¹ Cf. Vezio (Spartaco Lavagnini), *La nuova internazionale* (*The New International*), “La Difesa”, XIX, n. 48, 1 December 1917.

the separation between socialists and anarchists lay not only in anti-parliamentarism, but in the type of mentality since “our realistic criticism will never agree with the adamant ahistoricism of the anarchists”. The reformists leave the party for practical divergences, but to come closer to the libertarians would mean “greater and more dangerous confusion”, such as to lead to the disintegration of the PSI itself.⁹²

4. The main event that characterized 1917, destined to change the future of the world in the succeeding decades, was the fall of the autocracy in Russia with the two revolutions of February and October, up to the Bolsheviks’ coming to power. Gramsci followed the unfolding of events attentively and, right from the start, declared that the process underway would proceed up to the realization of socialism. In “La Città futura” he had already claimed that the revolution would find fewer obstacles in those States where bourgeois society was most backward: in the nations where street conflicts do not take place and basic laws are respected, revolutionary spirit “wilts” and social change seems less likely.⁹³

In Gramsci’s view, the former tsarist Empire represented the first country where the socialists “if they are not yet everything, are at least something important” and could become the arbiters of the international situation.⁹⁴ He rejected the parallel, drawn in one part of the bourgeois press and by the PSI reformists, with the French Revolution. In Russia, there was no Jacobinism, a term that he was using in this period with highly negative connotations, considering it “a purely bourgeois phenomenon”. The Jacobins had particularist ends, and for the authoritarian regime of the aristocracy they substituted a new order that was equally oppressive for the masses. The Russian socialists, on

⁹² *Per La nuova internazionale (Towards the New International)*, “Il Grido del popolo”, n. 698, 8 December 1917, and “La Difesa”, XIX, n. 50, 15 December 1917, pp. 632-36. (CF, 1982, *cit.*, pp. 473-7.) Serrati stated his agreement with Gramsci’s theses: see G.M. Serrati, *Per la terza Internazionale? (Towards the Third International?)*, “Avanti!”, 6 January 1918.

⁹³ *Three principles, three orders*, *cit.*

⁹⁴ *Morgari in Russia*, “Avanti!”, 20 April 1917, and “Il Grido del popolo”, XXII, n. 666, 29 April 1917, pp. 22-45. (CF 1982, *cit.*, pp. 131-3.)

the other hand, substituted universal male and female suffrage for the tsarist autocracy, since they were certain that the ideal that they embodied was “shared by the majority of the people”. He argued that the Russian revolution represented a “proletarian act” not because it was carried out by the masses – in such a case there would have been a war – but because certain “spiritual factors” had intervened, which had produced a change at the moral level, for which reason the revolution “must naturally lead to a socialist regime”. In order to demonstrate this assertion, he reported the news of a fact that had actually occurred in the city of Odessa: the revolutionaries freed not only the political prisoners but also the common criminals. This notwithstanding, some of the latter decided to stay in prison and continue to serve their sentence right to the end; for socialists “this news has more importance even than that of the dismissal of the tsar being”, since it indicated that the revolution had not only substituted one power for another, “has replaced one way of life by another”, thereby installing authentic spiritual freedom.⁹⁵

From these assertions, one evinces the prediction that arriving at socialism does not stem from an analysis of the real forces acting on the scene, an analysis that made difficult by the fragmentary nature and limited reliability of the news arriving from the ex-tsarist Empire, but from a series of deductions of an intellectual type, such as the fact that Jacobinism had been avoided and above all that renewal of moral life was being undertaken, essential aspects within Gramsci’s revolutionary perspective.⁹⁶

In July, for the first time he expressed his support for the Bolsheviks: a new wave of popular uprisings had just led to the formation of a government under the leadership of the social-revolutionary Kerenskij, while Lenin and various members of his party, regarded as responsible for the insurrection, had been forced to flee. Gramsci praised the activity that the Bolsheviks had undertaken up to that moment and said he was certain that, even if they had been swept

⁹⁵ A. G., *Note sulla rivoluzione russa* (*Notes on the Russian Revolution*), “Il Grido del popolo”, XXII, n. 666, 29 April 1917, pp. 255-9. (CF 1982, cit., pp. 138-42). [In English, Antonio Gramsci, *Selections from Political Writings (1910-1920)*, trans. John Mathews and ed. Quintin Hoare, London, Lawrence and Wishart, 1977, pp. 28-30.]

⁹⁶ Leonardo Rapone, *Cinque anni che paiono secoli*, cit., pp. 367-8.

aside, their followers, by now “too numerous” would not disappear. The maximalists were “the Russian revolution itself”, and wanted to bring about “socialism *in its entirety*”, making sure that the process underway would not be halted and be left half-way. Their will was embodied in millions of individuals, continually producing new energies, by which social aggregations were being formed and reformed without pause, ensuring that men were finally “the makers of their own destiny”.⁹⁷

August saw the arrival in Italy of four delegates from the Petrograd Soviet, the Soldiers’ and Workers’ Council that a month before had approved the warrant for the arrest of the Bolsheviks. They sought to obtain the PSI’s support for an international Conference to be held in Stockholm in order to reach a general, equal and just, peace as soon as possible. However in the various cities they visited, the crowds welcomed them with cries of support for Lenin, who was more and more considered the real leader of the revolution and who was animated by the wish to go right to the end, refusing any compromise solution with the class enemies.⁹⁸

On 13 August, two delegates, Gol’denberg and Smirnov, arrived in Turin and gave spoke to a crowd of more than thirty thousand workers. Gramsci enthused that the Russian revolution had constituted a new life for all,⁹⁹ but, influenced by the judgments in “Avanti!”, his preference went to Černov, the leader of the Socialist Revolutionary Party, who as from March had attracted the sympathies of Serrati’s paper. He asserted indeed that Lenin is “the mentor, who stimulated consciousness, who awakened dormant souls”, while Černov was the person to put projects “into practice”, to lead the proletariat to the conquest of power. The revolution absolutely could not stop at the democratic phase represented by Kerenskij: the Russian peasants and workers had matured rapidly over the past few months and now

⁹⁷ A.G. *I massimalisti russi*, “Il Grido del popolo”, XXII, n. 679, 28 July 1917, and “L’Avanguardia”, XI, n. 501, 12 August 1917, pp. 397-400. (CF 1982, cit., pp. 265-7) [In English, *The Russian Maximalists* in Antonio Gramsci, *Selections from Political Writings (1910-1920)*, cit., pp. 31-3.]

⁹⁸ Cf. Stefano Caretti, *La rivoluzione russa e il socialismo italiano (1917-1921)*, Pisa, Nistri-Lischi, 1974, pp. 71-4. The delegates were Gol’denberg, Ehrlich, Rusanov and Smirnov, belonging to various socialist tendencies, the Bolsheviks excluded.

⁹⁹ Cf. *Il compito della rivoluzione (The Task of the Russian Revolution)*, “Avanti!”, 15 August 1917, pp. 413-7. (CF 1982, cit., pp. 274-7.)

wanted the freedom to begin in concrete terms “the transformation of the economic and social world of the old Russia of the tsars”.¹⁰⁰

In November, the Party which led the proletariat to the conquest of power was not however that of Černov, but the Bolshevik Party. At the beginning of December, when the position of Lenin and his comrades seemed decidedly more stable, Gramsci wrote an article for “Il Grido del Popolo” on the most recent events in Russia, but it was suppressed by the censorship. A few weeks later, Serrati published it as an editorial in the most important socialist organ, thereby contributing to rekindle the debate on the possibility of realizing communism in an economically backward country such as Russia.

The article clearly shows the distance between Gramsci and any deterministic interpretation of Marxism, of the left as much as of the right. Already four months earlier, in speaking of the Bolsheviks, he had argued that they held it possible to realize socialism at any moment, given that they were revolutionaries and not evolutionists:

And revolutionary thought does not see time as a progressive factor. It denies that all intermediate stages between the conception of socialism and its achievement should have an absolute and integral confirmation in time and place. It holds that it is enough that these stages be realized in thought for the revolution to be able to proceed beyond them.¹⁰¹

These statements were taken up again and developed in the long editorial in December in which Gramsci provocatively defined the Bolshevik revolution as “the revolution against *Capital*”, Marx’s book which in Russia was read above all by the bourgeois, since it was the demonstration of “the fatal necessity” that, there too, a capitalist civilization should be formed before the proletariat began to think of its own redemption. Facts had instead demonstrated that the canons of historical materialism were not so rigid as was theorized by a certain positivist and evolutionist reading of Marx’s theory. The Bolsheviks

¹⁰⁰ Kerešky-Cernof, “Il Grido del popolo”, XXII, n. 688, 209 September 1917, pp. 496-8. (CF 1982, cit., pp. 358-60.)

¹⁰¹ A.G., *The Russian Maximalists*, cit. [trans. slightly modified to read “should” rather than “must” to take account of the subjunctive mood of the Italian verb – tr. note.]

“live Marxist thought – that thought which is eternal” since they continue the tradition of Italian and German idealist thought, which even in Marx’s philosophy “was contaminated by positivist and naturalist encrustations”. In actual fact, the greatest factor in history forever remained man or, more preferably, “men in societies” who develop a collective will, which in its turn “moulds objective reality”:

Marx foresaw the foreseeable. But he could not foresee the European war, or rather he could not foresee that the war would last as long as it has or have the effects it has had. He could not foresee that in the space of three years of unspeakable suffering and miseries, this war would have aroused in Russia the collective popular will that it has aroused. *In normal times* a lengthy process of gradual diffusion through society is needed for such a collective will to form; a wide range of class experience is necessary.

In peacetime conditions, the proletarians organize slowly, starting by creating leagues and mutual help societies, in a crescendo of pressures exerted on the bourgeoisie to improve their position. This explains why “*under normal conditions* the canons of historical criticism of materialism grasp reality”: the class struggle develops progressively, rising in intensity with the passage of time. When however the rhythm of facts is altered by an unforeseeable event such as a war, at that point the social dynamics can undergo a brusque change:

But in Russia the war galvanized the people’s will. As a result of the sufferings accumulated over three years, their will became as one overnight. Famine was imminent, and hunger, death from hunger could claim anyone, could crush tens of millions of men at one stroke. Mechanically at first, then actively and consciously after the first revolution, the people’s will became as one.

The world conflict had overthrown pre-established schemes: it was “socialist propaganda that forged the will of the Russian people”, enabling the passage to the new order. Certainly, it was “at first [to] be a collectivism of poverty and suffering”, but the very difficulties which the socialists had to face were also those which would have had to be overcome by the bourgeois, who would have found themselves faced with a proletariat unable to bear for others the sacrifices that economic development would involve. Socialism, therefore finds its justification

from a human point of view and the maximalists became “spontaneous expression of a *biological* necessity – that they had to take power if Russian humanity were not to fall prey to a horrible calamity”, but be able to build a better society.¹⁰²

War had therefore functioned as a formidable accelerator of the class struggle in Russia, but as regards Italy and the West, for the whole of 1918 Gramsci still remained anchored to a vision of the revolution that would come about when the capitalist regime had reached its highest level of development. Even the main lesson of the Bolsheviks, namely the creation of a new form of State based on the system of Soviets, was brought to fruition by Gramsci only in the Spring of 1919, when with a group of intellectuals and workers grouped around the review “L’Ordine Nuovo” gave birth to the factory council movement in Turin. The new proletarian institutions were based on the self-organization of the worker-producers and, while not constituting a rigid Italian translation of the “Soviets”, with all their limits they probably represented the sole concrete attempt before the advent of fascism to apply the lessons of Lenin to Italy.

¹⁰² A.G., *La rivoluzione contro “Il Capitale”*, “Il Grido del Popolo”, XXII, n. 697 and “Avanti!”, 22 December 1917 (Rome edition) and 24 December 1917 (Milan edition), *CF* 1982, cit., pp. 513-7. [In English *The Revolution Against ‘Capital’* in *Selections from Political Writings (1910-1920)*, cit., pp. 34-7; here “humanity” {“umanità” in the original} replaces “people” on p. 37 – tr. note.]



UNIVERSITY
OF WOLLONGONG
AUSTRALIA

2018

Quaderni di traduzioni (1929-1932) [Translation Notebooks (1929-1932)], 2 vols, Giuseppe Cospito and Gianni Francioni (eds) (in English)

Birgit Wagner

Follow this and additional works at: <http://ro.uow.edu.au/gramsci>

Recommended Citation

Wagner, Birgit, Quaderni di traduzioni (1929-1932) [Translation Notebooks (1929-1932)], 2 vols, Giuseppe Cospito and Gianni Francioni (eds) (in English), *International Gramsci Journal*, 2(4), 2018, 151-155.

Available at: <http://ro.uow.edu.au/gramsci/vol2/iss4/8>

Quaderni di traduzioni (1929-1932) [Translation Notebooks (1929-1932)], 2 vols, Giuseppe Cospito and Gianni Francioni (eds) (in English)

Abstract

Before Gramsci was given permission to write what we now know as his *Quaderni del carcere* (Prison Notebooks), he filled four other notebooks with translations (mainly from German, but also from Russian and some exercises from English); he also then included some translations from Marx in Notebook 7 in particular. In the translation notebooks we see him as an “apprentice translator”, certainly, but also note his overall approach to problems that are the constant preoccupation of translation scholars, his translations of the collection of folk tales collected by the Brothers Grimm being a case in point. Among other texts translated are a volume on historical linguistics and the 1927 number of “Die literarische Welt” on the new school of American social fiction, exemplifying the growing strata of United States intellectuals. The nineteenth-century Russian classics also aroused his interest for their link with and input into social ferment that was then beginning to grow in that country. Thus the link with some of the themes and subjects of what all regard as his major work and interests emerges clearly in these hitherto rather neglected notebooks.

Keywords

Translatability; linguistics; Gramsci’s translation work; folk tales; contemporary American literature; Marx

*Quaderni di traduzioni / Translation Notebooks (1929-1932)**

Birgit Wagner

Ever since Valentino Gerratana's most commendable publication of the *Prison Notebooks* (*Quaderni del Carcere*, 1975), and of course ever since the publication of Gramsci's *Prison Letters* (*Lettere dal carcere*, first partly published in 1947, in the post-war context, then in the first critical edition of Sergio Caprioglio and Elsa Fubini in 1975) readers could be aware of the importance of translation for Gramsci's intellectual well-being during the prison time and, perhaps more importantly, of the centrality of "translatability" ("traducibilità") for his political and philosophical thought. Yet, Gerratana's edition gave only a small place, more like a teaser, to the translations – probably for reasons of economy (in order not to overload this first critical edition), and perhaps because the question of translation did not appear so important at that time as it now seems to us. Even more welcome, therefore, are the two large volumes dedicated to the *Quaderni di traduzioni* within the context of the *Edizione Nazionale* of Gramsci's writings.

Actually, these volumes were the first (2007) published in the ongoing and still uncompleted series of this important editorial effort – a fact that might indicate the importance of translation in its literal and metaphorical meaning in our days.

Giuseppe Cospito, the author of the introduction (*Introduzione*, Vol. 1, pp. 11-40)¹ – a text that any Gramsci scholar should read – quotes Gerratana's introduction, where the latter states that in his opinion the translations were only an intellectual exercise for the prisoner, not connected to his theoretical work in the *Prison Notebooks*. However, the

* *Quaderni di traduzioni*, 2 vols, 915 pp., Giuseppe Cospito e Gianni Francioni (eds), *Edizione Nazionale degli scritti di Antonio Gramsci*, Istituto della Enciclopedia Italiana, 2007

¹ His text draws frequently on Lucia Borghese's seminal essay "Tia Alene in bicicletta. Gramsci traduttore dal tedesco e teorico della traduzione", in: *Belfagor* XXXVI, 1981, p. 635-65, unfortunately never entirely quoted, at least not in the "Introduzione". [This article, "Aunt Alene on her bicycle" may now be read in an English translation: see *Gramsci. Language and Translation*, ed. Peter Ives and Rocco Lacorte, Lanham, Lexington, 2010, pp. 135-70.]

current editors can prove him wrong. As Cospito rightly emphasizes, the translations not only embrace more than 700 pages in print of the prison manuscripts (3000 in total, see “Introduzione”, p. 13), but each and every one is linked to Gramsci’s manifold intellectual projects and capable of completing and even enriching their comprehension.

The first case Cospito examines is the translation of the magazine *Die literarische Welt*, issue 1927, dedicated to the then contemporary American literature. As however stated by Giorgio Baratta², this particular interest is closely related to Gramsci’s interest in modernism and to the paragraphs on “Americanism and Fordism” of the *Prison Notebooks*, most notably the monographic notebook 22 which he entitled “Americanismo e fordismo”. Grimm’s *Fairy Tales*, a major interest for the apprentice translator Gramsci, corresponds to his interest in fables – see the short Sardinian stories he sent to his sons in Russia in the moving last letters of his prison correspondence – as well as to his interest in popular culture. As is well known, Gramsci also translated from Russian, drawing on an anthology presenting the most famous Russian writers of the nineteenth century, considered exemplary models of high-level national-popular literature, which could introduce untrained readers to “good” literature. These are, therefore, in some ways linked to the same issue as Grimm’s *Fairy Tales*, namely empowering narratives.

The same statement is valid for the translation of Goethe’s text – Goethe being for Gramsci an exemplary “national”, but not “nationalist” writer (see *Introduzione* p. 21, citing Notebook 3, paragraph 2 of the *Prison Notebooks*** – the lack of whom in Italian literature, rightly or wrongly, he often deplors in the *Notebooks*. The selection of Goethe’s poems is certainly the most ardent enterprise among his translations – the one into which he put the most effort. They are accompanied by a selection of Goethe’s conversations with Eckermann, this latter related, amongst other concerns, to Gramsci’s constant debate with

² Giorgio Baratta, *Le rose e i quaderni. Il pensiero dialogico di Antonio Gramsci* [*The Roses and the Notebooks. The Dialogic Thought of Antonio Gramsci*], Roma, Carocci 2003, note p. 142.

** Gerratana p. 284; in English *Selections from Cultural Writings*, D. Forgacs and G. Nowell-Smith (eds), p. 260 [tr. Note].

the philosopher Croce, one of his constant outstanding models and intellectual adversaries (*Introduzione*, p. 22).

Gramsci was a learned linguist (remember his Turin study time with the linguist Matteo Giulio Bartoli), and so it is not surprising that he undertook the translation of a manual by Franz Nikolaus Finck, *Die Sprachstämme des Erdkreises*, representing his interest in – as we would nowadays say – culturally informed linguistics that is obvious in many sections of the *Notebooks*. And who would wonder that he undertook translations from Marx, drawn from *Lohnarbeit und Kapital. Zur Judenfrage und andere Schriften aus der Frühzeit* [*Wage Labour and Capital. The Jewish Question and other Early Writings*], even with the limits that his condition as a prisoner of a fascist state imposed? Their relation to the political section of the *Notebooks* is obvious and clarify the divergent readings Gramsci gave to these texts regarding the *vulgata* proposed by the Third International. Here we are extremely close to Gramsci's political vision (*Introduzione*, p. 25).

In the last section, Cospito gives an overview of Gramsci's translation strategies, accomplishments and deficiencies (the last quite understandable, as the Sardinian philosopher was a politician and political thinker, not a trained translator). However, he was a theoretician of translation, as Cospito rightly states. The strategies employed to translate Grimm's *Fairy Tales*, already studied by Lucia Borghese, are remarkable in aiming to achieve a lay version, adjusted to his intended readers, that is, his sister's children, in order to provide them with an "empowering" vision of the world – the intended public they never reached, due to the veto of the prison's authorities.

The editors divided their responsibilities: Cospito, aside from the *Introduzione*, also furnishes most useful explanatory notes, while Gianni Francioni has seen to the critical edition of the text and the important textual note (*Nota al testo*, at the end of the second volume, p. 835-98). All these tasks have been carried out with outstanding philological expertise. Notes to the translations appear when they are necessary, i.e. in cases of clear misunderstanding of the text, or when Gramsci takes the liberty to change slightly the literal sense in the interest of his own political and philosophical convictions.

Actually, translation is one of the most accurate modes to read a text. In the task he undertakes to translate a selection of Marx's texts, the prisoner not only exercises his mind – in the period when he was not yet allowed to write texts of his own – but finds himself in constant dialogue with these founding writings. Aside from his possible misunderstandings, he also finds creative solutions for the rendering of Marxist terminology – creative solutions that slightly or not so slightly diverge from the then Marxist *vulgata* – and so prepare, perhaps even contribute, to making his own political thought emerge. That is not of course what a professional translator is supposed to do, but Gramsci did not translate in order to prepare a critical edition, he wanted to enter into a dialogue with Marx's thoughts, thereby intending to clarify his own political philosophy. Most interesting are therefore the ample notes to *Lohnarbeit und Kapital*, for instance the origin of Gramsci's notion of "praxis"³ so important to his own political theory (see p. 743 and the note on p. 814), one of the many examples of his creative appropriations.

Obviously, the translation "exercises" were not a mere stopgap for the prisoner. In a way, they appear to be such in the sense that in the early period in prison Gramsci was not able to undertake other intellectual projects. However, as the present edition clearly shows, they prepare and pave the way for the *Prison Notebooks*, in a dimension that has been frequently underestimated.

But there is more. The editors pay little attention to the metaphorical meaning of translation (*traducibilità*, translatability), a term of utmost importance in Gramsci's political thought – perhaps because it is not the task of a critical edition to exceed its prior purpose. Yet, in my opinion, this edition opens up possibilities to pursue investigation on the link between literal and metaphorical translation.

Of course, this has been prepared in the past, years before the publication of the *Quaderni di traduzioni*. Important studies to mention are Derek Boothman's book *Traducibilità e processi traduttivi* (*Translatability*

³ Gramsci's translation of Marx here reads "l'oggetto, il reale, il sensibile è concepito solo sotto la forma dell'oggetto o della intuizione; ma non come attività sensibile umana, praxis, non soggettivamente": translating literally in English "the thing [*Gegenstand*], the real, sensuousness is conceived under the form of the object [*Objekt*] or of intuition; but not as human sensuous activity, praxis, not subjectively".

and translatable processes)⁴ and Giorgio Baratta's interpretation of the term "translatability".⁵ The term in question can be conceived as a communicational (and hence political) device as well as in an ethical sense: as the capability to listen to others, not only to put forward one's own political and intellectual principles, as the capacity for democratic – and human! – dialogue, in order to meet the addressee's cultural horizon. I am quite aware of the fact that Gramsci would not have used this terminology – but it matches how we can nowadays think of it.

Because we have to "translate" Gramsci's insights to our present: and this project needs, among other capabilities, philological expertise (which Gramsci would have approved of). It seems that this view has made it nowadays to new topicality. Suffice it to take a look at the *International Gramsci Journal*, vol.1, issue 4. There, Gianni Fresu comments on the contributions of Cosimo Zene and Peter D. Thomas, both dedicated to uses and misunderstandings of Gramsci's reflections on subaltern groups, under the label "traducibilità e modernità" and the "possibili traduzioni del patrimonio teorico gramsciano, in concrete formazioni economico-sociali profondamente diverse da quelle indagate dall'intellettuale sardo" ("the possible translations of Gramsci's theoretical heritage into concrete socio-economic formations profoundly different from those investigated by our Sardinian intellectual himself").⁶

Of course, the translatability of concepts presupposes correct reading of texts – as Peter D. Thomas shows convincingly in his essay – and close attention to literal translation. The present edition give us a rich instrument to investigate this question.

⁴ Derek Boothman, *Traducibilità e processi traduttivi. Un caso: Gramsci linguista*, Perugia, Guerra Edizioni 2004. Boothman opens up the discussion on "translatability" with the last chapter of his book ("La traducibilità di Gramsci – verso un bilancio provvisorio"). It is to be hoped that the promised update of this book in English will appear before not too long.

⁵ Giorgio Baratta, *Antonio Gramsci in contrappunto. Dialoghi con il presente* [*Antonio Gramsci in Counterpoint. Dialogues with the Present*], Rome, Carocci 2007, see especially pp. 22 et seq. Cfr. also my essay "Cultural Translation: A Value or a Tool? Let's start with Gramsci", in: Federico Italiano / Michael Rössner (ed.) *Translatio/n. Narration, Media and the Staging of Differences*, Bielefeld, Transcript, 2012, p. 51-68 (a text written already with the help of the current edition of the *Quaderni di traduzioni*).

⁶ Gianni Fresu, "Traducibilità e modernità del nesso concettuale egemonico/subalterno nelle relazioni di Peter Thomas and Cosimo Zene", *International Gramsci Journal*, 1 (4), 2015, p. 94-100, here p. 94. The texts Fresu comments are the following: Cosimo Zene, "I subalterni nel mondo: tipologie e nesso con le differenti forme dell'esperienza religiosa", p. 66-82 and Peter D. Thomas, "Cosa rimane dei subalterni alla luce dello 'Stato integrale'?", p. 83-93, both in the same issue.

International Gramsci Journal

Volume 2
Issue 4 *Readings and Applications of Gramsci /*
The National Edition of Gramsci's Writings

Article 9

2018

**Epistolario, Vol. 2, maggio 1922-novembre 1923, a cura di Davide Bidussa,
Francesco Giasi e Maria Luisa Righi (in italiano)**

Lelio La Porta

Follow this and additional works at: <https://ro.uow.edu.au/gramsci>

Recommended Citation

La Porta, Lelio, Epistolario, Vol. 2, maggio 1922-novembre 1923, a cura di Davide Bidussa, Francesco Giasi e Maria Luisa Righi (in italiano), *International Gramsci Journal*, 2(4), 2018, 156-162.

Available at: <https://ro.uow.edu.au/gramsci/vol2/iss4/9>

Research Online is the open access institutional repository for the University of Wollongong. For further information contact the UOW Library: research-pubs@uow.edu.au

Epistolario, Vol. 2, maggio 1922-novembre 1923, a cura di Davide Bidussa, Francesco Giasi e Maria Luisa Righi (in italiano)

Abstract

Gramsci's correspondence January-November 1923 includes both political letters (to and from him, a number published here for the first time) and also personal ones, some redated and, in consequence, having as recipient not the Schucht sister (Julija) to whom they were until recently thought to be addressed. The background information supplied to the political letters, and inclusion in the volume of the letters received by Gramsci, helps to flesh out the general context of what was happening in both the Comintern and in the Italian Communist Party. In the aftermath of the Fourth Congress of the International (November-December 1922) a clarification of positions began in the PCI, with what would become the centre group around Gramsci distancing itself both from Bordiga's left and from Tasca's right (later incorporated into the centre). Further, under pressure from the International, moves – not accepted by everyone – began towards a stable alliance between the infant Communist Party and the pro-Comintern left of the Socialist Party (the Third Internationalist fraction); after the last relatively free elections, the majority of this fraction then merged with the PCI into what became a united Communist Party.

Keywords

Letters 1923; Comintern; Schucht sisters; Third Internationalists; founding of "L'Unità"; centre group in PCI

Epistolario 2 ***gennaio-novembre 1923****

Lelio La Porta

Il secondo volume dell'Epistolario raccoglie le lettere del periodo gennaio-novembre del 1923. Nella prima Sezione del volume, il vero e proprio epistolario, sono raccolte le lettere di Gramsci e a Gramsci; nell'*Appendice 1* sono raccolte le lettere inviate in copia e quelle prodotte da organismi dirigenti di cui era membro; nell'*Appendice 2* compaiono le minute di lettere incompiute scritte da Gramsci. Ci sono poi alcune lettere private indirizzate da Gramsci ad Eugenia e Giulia Schucht che costituiscono una piccola parte del materiale pubblicato in quanto la maggior parte della corrispondenza riguarda l'attività di Gramsci quale rappresentante del Partito comunista d'Italia nell'Esecutivo del Comintern.

Nella prima Sezione sono pubblicate 22 lettere di Gramsci delle quali otto sono inedite, così come inedita risulta l'ultima parte della lettera del 29 marzo del 1923, inviata da Gramsci e Egidio Gennari da Mosca al CE del PcdI (lettera 23), in cui si sollecita un contatto con Piero Sraffa e Alessandro Molinari per farne i corrispondenti per un bollettino "che tratti i problemi nazionali ed internazionali della classe operaia da un punto di vista sostanzialmente comunista, ma con forma obbiettiva, di informazione e discussione disinteressata" (p. 80). Le lettere alle sorelle Schucht risultano con datazioni e destinatarie diverse rispetto a precedenti edizioni delle lettere stesse, come si specificherà in seguito. Nell'*Appendice 1* compaiono le lettere inviate a nome del Cc del PcdI all'Esecutivo e al Presidium dell'Internazionale comunista ritenendosi indirizzate a Gramsci anche le lettere in cui non veniva specificato il destinatario in quanto egli era membro di questi organismi. Soltanto le lettere al Segretariato, piuttosto numerose, sono state

* *Epistolario Vol. 2, gennaio-novembre 1923*, pp. 706, dell'*Edizione Nazionale degli scritti di Antonio Gramsci* (a cura di David Bidussa, Francesco Giasi, Maria Luisa Righi con la collaborazione di Leonardo Pompeo D'Alessandro, Eleonora Lattanzi, Francesco Ursini).

incluse nell'Appendice quando Gramsci è fra i destinatari. Ancora in quest'*Appendice* compaiono lettere indirizzate ad altri organismi internazionali, alle varie sezioni del Comintern, ad organismi di partiti comunisti di altri paesi. Nell'*Appendice 2* compaiono appunti manoscritti ritenuti con certezza, dai curatori del volume, abbozzi di lettere.

Il quadro storico entro il quale vanno collocati i materiali contenuti nel volume è costituito dalle conseguenze del IV Congresso dell'Internazionale Comunista (novembre-dicembre 1922). In quel contesto esplode in Italia la questione della fusione con i massimalisti di Serrati. Il Congresso socialista che si svolge a Roma (1-3 ottobre 1922) sancisce la spaccatura all'interno del PSI. Serrati presenta un documento in cui si legge: «si è affermata nell'organizzazione socialista una tendenza, con propria disciplina, allo scopo confessato di condurre il partito alla collaborazione con la borghesia e all'accettazione degli istituti attuali» per cui «tutti gli aderenti alla frazione collaborazionista e quanti approvano le direttive segnate (nella mozione) sono espulsi dal Partito Socialista Italiano». Turati fonderà il Partito Socialista Unitario (PSU). Zinovev, presidente dell'Internazionale Comunista, ritiene che, essendo stati espulsi i riformisti, ora si possa realizzare la fusione tra il PCd'I e il PSI, per poi portare avanti una politica di fronte unico nei confronti di Turati. La maggioranza dei delegati comunisti al congresso è però contraria alla fusione anche se Gramsci, differenziandosi da Bordiga, si dichiara favorevole all'accettazione della proposta di Zinovev. Si arriva quindi alla formazione della commissione di fusione, composta da Gramsci, Scoccimarro e Tasca per il PCI e Serrati, Tonetti e Maffi per il PSI. La commissione raggiunge l'accordo per la fusione, contro cui si schiera subito l'ala del PSI guidata da Nenni, ma l'Esecutivo del PCI, che pure aveva accettato forzatamente la fusione, con Bordiga, Grieco, Gnudi e Berti in carcere (dopo la costituzione del governo Mussolini), è nei fatti nell'impossibilità di funzionare. Il congresso del PSI di Milano del 1923 si pronuncia contro la fusione e porta alla rottura definitiva, nel mese di agosto, tra il PSI e l'Internazionale. Attorno a Nenni si forma una nuova maggioranza, con Serrati e Lazzari in minoranza (Serrati verrà più avanti espulso dal PSI e, dopo aver costituito la frazione dei comunisti unitari, aderirà al PCd'I). L'Internazionale ritiene il PCI il maggiore responsabile della mancata

fusione e, con un atto d'autorità che ha l'impronta di Zinovev, provvede ad un cambiamento d'imperio del gruppo dirigente del PCI: con Bordiga in carcere, il comitato esecutivo dell'Internazionale designa a guidare il partito Togliatti, Scoccimarro, Gennari, Tasca e Terracini. Un gruppo dirigente favorevole alla unificazione con il PSI. Sul finire del 1923, Bordiga propone ai dirigenti della maggioranza del partito una lettera in cui si rivendica la linea del partito e si criticano i deliberati dell'Internazionale sulla questione del fronte unico. Gramsci, condividendo la linea dell'Internazionale, si rifiuta di firmare la lettera, rompe con Bordiga e forma una nuova area che si colloca al centro tra la sinistra di Bordiga e la destra di Tasca.

Questo è il quadro d'insieme della situazione entro la quale collocare l'*Epistolario*. Vediamo più da vicino alcuni passaggi significativi della corrispondenza. L'11 gennaio del 1923 Bordiga invia a Gramsci un telegramma (*Epistolario*, vol. 2, p. 9) con il quale lo mette a conoscenza dell'esistenza di un mandato di cattura contro di lui. In realtà il primo mandato di cattura contro Gramsci sarà emesso il 2 marzo dal giudice istruttore di Teramo ma Bordiga, partendo dall'avvenuto fermo di Grieco il 29 dicembre, ipotizza che si intendesse arrestare l'intero vertice comunista. Sarà poi Scoccimarro, in una lettera proprio del 2 marzo a dare notizia a Gramsci dell'avvenuto arresto di Serrati e del mandato di cattura spiccato contro di lui e gli altri componenti della delegazione italiana presso l'Internazionale in quanto rei di aver firmato il manifesto della stessa Internazionale contro il fascismo (*Epistolario*, vol. 2, *Appendice 1*, lettere 20 e 24). In Italia, quindi, era in corso un giro di vite poliziesco che aveva come fine la disgregazione del Partito già molto provato dall'immobilismo e dal settarismo del gruppo dirigente. Scrivendo rispettivamente al Comitato esecutivo e al Segretariato del Comintern (*Epistolario*, vol. 2, *Appendice 1*, lettere 25 e 26), Terracini descriveva con grande efficacia la situazione di difficoltà dei comunisti in Italia, una situazione resa con concretezza ancora maggiore, se possibile, in una lettera del 13 febbraio (lo stesso giorno in cui viene inviata la lettera al C.E. del Comintern) alla Federazione italiana comunista degli Stati Uniti nella quale si legge: «Il governo fascista ha aperto la grande battuta anticomunista da tempo preannunciata» (in *Alba nuova*, organo della sezione italiana del

Workers Party of America, a. III, n. 10, 17 marzo 1923). Nell'ambito della "battuta anticomunista" vanno collocati sia l'arresto di Bordiga il 3 febbraio, sia l'arresto di Serrati il 2 marzo sia i mandati di cattura contro i componenti italiani della delegazione presso l'internazionale. Per tutti ci sarà il rinvio a giudizio il 18 luglio e il processo che, tenutosi a Roma e iniziato il 18 ottobre, si concluderà il 26 con l'assoluzione di tutti gli imputati.

Altro momento decisivo messo in evidenza dai materiali contenuti nel volume è l'intreccio dei contrasti all'interno del Pcd'I in quel preciso momento storico. Se fino alla primavera del 1923 Gramsci aveva preferito non accentuare i contrasti con Bordiga, a partire dalla lettera del 18 maggio del 1923 a Togliatti la guerra sarà dichiarata (*Epistolario*, vol. 2, pp. 102-109). Gramsci inizia a segnalare l'equivocità di alcuni atteggiamenti assunti dalla dirigenza comunista italiana nei confronti del Comintern concretizzatisi in un provincialismo di fatto che, considerando preminenti le questioni locali, le sottraeva alla necessaria dialettica con le questioni internazionali eludendo, così, una delle manifestazioni a cui l'Esecutivo del Comintern maggiormente teneva: l'unanimità nelle votazioni che, da un lato, significa disciplina e, dall'altro lato, priva di contenuti la tendenza ad aggregarsi intorno a minoranze. Quest'insieme di questioni vengono proposte al Partito italiano dapprima in una lettera di risposta a Togliatti (*Epistolario*, vol. 2, p. 122) il quale, in data 23 luglio, aveva inviato a Gramsci una missiva con allegata una lettera di Bordiga a Zinovev e Bucharin. Gramsci si dice addolorato della situazione del Partito che sarà presto diretto da una minoranza «creata dai nostri errori e dalla nostra passività»; la conclusione della lettera è amara e quasi sconsolante: «... ti confesso riuscirmi assolutamente incomprensibile che dei rivoluzionari, che siano convinti del loro programma, abbandonino il loro posto, che oggi, data la situazione generale, è una barricata da difendere e non solo dai nemici che stanno di fronte» (*Ibidem*). Evidentemente collegata alla lettera appena citata è la minuta incompiuta di una lettera a Togliatti dell'agosto del 1923 e, per informazione, a tutti i compagni che lavorano con lui, nella quale si legge: «Bisogna (...) lavorare concretamente, dimostrare, attraverso tutta un'azione di partito e una operosità politica che sia adeguata alla situazione italiana, che si è quelli

che si pretende di essere e non continuare più con l'atteggiamento finora avuto di "genii incompresi"» (*Epistolario*, vol. 2, *Appendice 2*, p. 582).

Cosa intende Gramsci per "operosità politica"? Di fatto, all'epoca, la sua operosità politica è compressa fra l'impegno richiestogli dall'Internazionale per creare centri europei di informazione sul fascismo e di lotta contro di esso (a Berlino e a Vienna) e la discussione nata dalla crisi del gruppo dirigente del partito italiano. Alcuni compagni italiani vorrebbero che si avvicinasse, come fa presente Togliatti in una lettera del 13 agosto al Segretariato del Comintern (*Epistolario*, vol. 2, *Appendice 1*, p. 462); infatti l'Esecutivo del Pcd'I, il giorno 20, indica che la sua destinazione sarà Berlino, trovando in ciò la netta opposizione di Terracini, giunto nel frattempo a Mosca per far parte del Presidium dell'Internazionale. Lo stesso Terracini mette in evidenza la situazione di precarietà in cui versa la stampa comunista, sottoposta agli interventi di chiusura da parte delle autorità italiane. In questo clima, nell'agosto, Togliatti e i suoi collaboratori danno vita al settimanale *Lo stato operaio*, che si stampa a Milano in semiclandestinità. Intanto i rapporti fra Comintern e PSI si fanno sempre più tesi fino a divenire una rottura vera e propria, visto che il partito italiano non sopporta al proprio interno l'esistenza dei "terzini" i quali si sono dotati di un loro organo, *Pagine rosse*. I redattori della rivista, fra cui Serrati, Maffi e Riboldi, vengono prima radiati e poi espulsi. Togliatti, il 3 settembre, scrive al Comitato esecutivo del Comintern una lunga lettera nella quale descrive compiutamente la situazione e, di fatto, fa presente che con il PSI, ad esclusione, ovviamente, della frazione terzinternazionalista, non è più possibile alcun accordo (*Epistolario*, vol. 2, *Appendice 1*, pp. 489-96). Il 5 settembre Otto Kuusinen, con una lettera inviata al comitato centrale comunista e al direttivo dei "terzini", comunica la decisione del Presidium del Comintern di pubblicare un quotidiano che abbia due scopi: «controbilanciare l'influenza dell'*Avanti!* fra le masse» e porsi come organo comune fra comunisti e "terzini", in vista di una loro fusione (*Epistolario*, vol. 2, pp. 128-129; sulla questione del quotidiano si vedano anche le lettere 104 (P. Togliatti al Segretariato del Comintern, [Milano], 10 settembre 1923, pp. 512-26) e 113 (Mauro Scoccimarro al Segretariato del Comintern, [Roma], 11 ottobre 1923,

pp. 562-3). Entrambe si trovano in *Appendice 1* alle pagine indicate. Il 12 settembre del 1923 Gramsci scrive da Mosca al Comitato Esecutivo del Pcd'I, Nella lettera fa propria l'indicazione del Comintern relativa alla creazione di un quotidiano e, soprattutto, pone alcuni capisaldi di quella che sarà la sua successiva impostazione metodologica, teorica e politica: la questione meridionale, un'analisi originale del fascismo, il superamento del settarismo duro e puro, la ricerca del complesso di forze politiche e sociali che dovranno essere l'espressione di un governo operaio e contadino. Per il problema sindacale, vanno conquistate le commissioni interne senza spingere fino ad una scissione del sindacato. Su tutta la lettera aleggia lo spirito di una parola che sta per assumere valore centrale in tutta la futura riflessione gramsciana: egemonia (*Epistolario*, vol. 2, pp. 126-8; sulla realizzazione del quotidiano anche la lettera 40, pp. 134-6).

Il 21 settembre scatta una nuova ondata di arresti nei confronti dei dirigenti comunisti italiani; ciò fermerà, ma soltanto momentaneamente, il flusso dei rapporti epistolari fra loro e Gramsci il quale, il 4 dicembre, giunge a Vienna. Ora il problema centrale sarà costituito dai rapporti con Bordiga (la materia sarà trattata nel prossimo volume dell'*Epistolario*, in preparazione).

Le lettere 2, 8, 12, 13, 17, 18, 35 sono destinate alle sorelle Schucht. Sulle nuove datazioni e le nuove destinatarie rispetto ad edizioni precedenti si può leggere il saggio di una delle curatrici del volume dell'*Epistolario*, cioè Maria Luisa Righi, intitolato *Gramsci a Mosca tra amori e politica (1922-1923)* in *Studi storici*, a. 52, n. 4, 2011, pp. 1001-32. Nella sostanza Gramsci, prima di iniziare la sua relazione con Giulia, che divenne la sua compagna e madre dei suoi due figli, Delio e Giuliano, aveva avuto una relazione, o comunque un rapporto molto più che amichevole, con Eugenia. Le novità intervenute nell'analisi delle lettere chiariscono molto, quindi, i reali rapporti fra Gramsci e le due sorelle Schucht; in questo senso assume un significato particolare la lettera 12, destinataria della quale si riteneva che fosse Giulia, mentre in realtà era destinata a Eugenia così come la lettera 35, precedentemente datata agosto 1922, che invece risulta essere dell'agosto dell'anno successivo in quanto Gramsci conobbe Giulia nel

settembre del 1922 e, perciò, non avrebbe potuto scriverle nell'agosto di quell'anno.

Come si evince da quanto fin qui scritto, questo secondo volume dell'*Epistolario* gramsciano consente di ripercorrere, con maggior fedeltà ai fatti, l'ultima fase del soggiorno moscovita di Gramsci e di verificare l'intensità dell'impegno politico di un uomo peraltro fortemente segnato nel fisico. Dall'altro lato vengono alla luce, grazie ad un'attenta operazione di recupero dei documenti, verità fin qui poco note della stessa vicenda sentimentale del comunista sardo. Se sommiamo le due cose ne sortisce un Gramsci, come dire, "totale" nel senso del politico+uomo. Proprio nel periodo coperto da questo secondo volume appare nella sua complessità il profilo di un comunista per il quale la vita pubblica, a suo modo massacrante in un momento di ferro e di fuoco, tutta dedicata alla cura del Partito e alla gestione di rapporti interni sottili come tela di ragno, sottoposto ai richiami continui dei dirigenti del Comintern al fine di trovare la soluzione migliore della questione italiana, si completava con una vita privata tesa alla ricerca di un "ubi consistam" per chi, scrivendo di se stesso, sosteneva che esisteva per lui «una impossibilità assoluta, quasi fatale, a che io possa essere amato» (*Epistolario*, vol. 2, p. 26).

Un aspetto della cura del volume va messo in risalto: le note ad ogni testo proposto. Sono proprio le note, sotto molti aspetti, a consentire di ricostruire il percorso gramsciano togliendo dubbi e perplessità su datazioni e collocazioni dei fatti nel contesto. In questo senso, sarebbe possibile tornare a scrivere anche la storia del Pci in quella precisa fase storica integrando la ricerca di Spriano con i documenti ora inseriti in questo secondo volume dell'Edizione nazionale degli scritti gramsciani.

International Gramsci Journal

Volume 2
Issue 4 *Readings and Applications of Gramsci /*
The National Edition of Gramsci's Writings

Article 10

2018

**Correspondence, Vol. 2, May 1922-November 1923, Davide Bidussa,
Francesco Giasi and Maria Luisa Righi (eds) (in English)**

Lelio La Porta

Follow this and additional works at: <https://ro.uow.edu.au/gramsci>

Recommended Citation

La Porta, Lelio, Correspondence, Vol. 2, May 1922-November 1923, Davide Bidussa, Francesco Giasi and Maria Luisa Righi (eds) (in English), *International Gramsci Journal*, 2(4), 2018, 163-170.

Available at: <https://ro.uow.edu.au/gramsci/vol2/iss4/10>

Research Online is the open access institutional repository for the University of Wollongong. For further information contact the UOW Library: research-pubs@uow.edu.au

Correspondence, Vol. 2, May 1922-November 1923, Davide Bidussa, Francesco Giasi and Maria Luisa Righi (eds) (in English)

Abstract

Gramsci's correspondence January-November 1923 includes both political letters (to and from him, a number published here for the first time) and also personal ones, some redated and, in consequence, having as recipient not the Schucht sister (Julija) to whom they were until recently thought to be addressed. The background information supplied to the political letters, and inclusion in the volume of the letters received by Gramsci, helps to flesh out the general context of what was happening in both the Comintern and in the Italian Communist Party. In the aftermath of the Fourth Congress of the International (November-December 1922) a clarification of positions began in the PCI, with what would become the centre group around Gramsci distancing itself both from Bordiga's left and from Tasca's right (later incorporated into the centre). Further, under pressure from the International, moves – not accepted by everyone – began towards a stable alliance between the infant Communist Party and the pro-Comintern left of the Socialist Party (the Third Internationalist fraction); after the last relatively free elections, the majority of this fraction then merged with the PCI into what became a united Communist Party.

Keywords

Letters 1923; Comintern; Schucht sisters; Third Internationalists; founding of "L'Unità"; centre group in PCI

*Epistolario (Correspondence), Vol. 2, January-November 1923*¹

Lelio La Porta

The second volume of Gramsci's *Correspondence* brings together the letters of the period from January to November 1923. The first part brings together the letters both from and to Gramsci, while *Appendix 1* includes the letters sent in copy and those produced by leading bodies of which Gramsci was a member, and *Appendix 2* includes his drafts of incomplete letters. There are in addition a number of private letters addressed by Gramsci to Evgenija (Ženija) and Julija (Jul'ka) Schucht, which form a small part of his correspondence as compared with the material regarding his activities as representative of the Partito Comunista d'Italia (PCd'I) on the Comintern Executive Committee.

The first Section includes twenty two letters of Gramsci, of which eight were unpublished up to the appearance of this volume. The same remark applies to the last part of the letter of 29 March 1923, which Gramsci and Egidio Gennari sent from Moscow to the Executive Committee of the PCd'I (letter 23), in which they suggested contacting Piero Sraffa and Alessandro Molinari as possible correspondents for a bulletin "dealing with all the national and international problems of the working class from a substantially communist viewpoint, but in an objective form, offering dispassionate information and discussion" (p. 80).² Some of the letters to the Schucht sisters appear here with a new dating, and sometimes also the recipient of a letter is not the sister to whom, in previous editions, the letter was thought to be addressed, a matter that will be dealt with later.

¹ *Correspondence*, Vol. 2, January-November 1923, pp. 706, of the *National Edition of Antonio Gramsci's Writings*, edited by David Bidussa, Francesco Giasi and Maria Luisa Righi with additional help from Leonardo Pompeo D'Alessandro, Eleonora Lattanzi and Francesco Ursini.

² In English Antonio Gramsci. *A Great and Terrible World. The Pre-Prison Letters 1908-1926*, ed. and trans. Derek Boothman, London, Lawrence and Wishart, 2014 and Chicago, Haymarket Press, 2014, p. 151. [By an oversight the English edition's name index wrongly identifies Molinari as "Luigi Molinari", an anarchist who died five years previously to this letter – tr. note.]

Appendix 1 includes the letters sent in the name of the Central Committee of the PCd'I to the Executive and to the Presidium of the Communist International, Gramsci as a member these bodies being a recipient of these letters. The fairly numerous letters to the Secretariat are included in this appendix only when Gramsci was one of the recipients. Again in this same appendix readers will find the letters addressed to other international bodies, to the various sections of the Comintern and to organs of communist parties of other countries. *Appendix 2*, instead, contains handwritten notes by Gramsci that are considered by the editors, with certainty, to be his drafts of letters.

The historical framework of the material contained in the volume is given by the consequences of the Fourth Congress of the Communist International (November-December 1922), with the Italian context provided by the explosion of the question of the fusion between the PCd'I with Serrati's maximalists of the Socialist Party. The PSI Congress in Rome (1-3 October 1922) sanctioned the split among the socialists. The document presented there by Serrati read that "a tendency, with its own discipline, has come to the fore in the Socialist Party, with the confessed aim of taking the party into collaboration with the bourgeoisie and the acceptance of current institutions", and on account of this "all members of the collaborationist fraction and those who approve the lines laid down [in the motion] are expelled from the Italian Socialist Party". Turati went on to found the Partito Socialista Unitario (PSU) in November 1922. Zinov'ev, president of the Communist International maintained that, since the reformists had been expelled, one could then bring to fruition the policy of fusion between the PCd'I and the PSI in order to carry forward a united front policy regarding Turati. The majority of the communist delegates at the congress were however against fusion even if Gramsci, distancing himself from Bordiga, came out in favour of accepting Zinov'ev's proposal. All this led to the formation of the fusion commission, comprising Gramsci, Scoccimarro and Tasca for the PCI and Serrati, Tonetti and Maffei for the PSI.

The commission reached an agreement on fusion, which immediately met with the opposition of the wing of the PSI led by Pietro Nenni, but the PCI Executive, which under pressure had even accepted the

fusion proposal, was to all intents and purposes unable to function, since, after the formation of the Mussolini government, Bordiga together with others of its members (Ruggero Grieco, Ennio Gnudi and Giuseppe Berti) were in prison. The 1923 Congress of the PSI in Milan came out against fusion, which led to the final break between the PSI and the International in August of that year. A new majority was formed around Nenni, putting Serrati and the veteran Costantino Lazzari in the minority; Serrati would later on be expelled from the PSI and, after having constituted the Unitary Communist fraction, joined the PCd'I. The International was of the opinion that the PCI was mainly responsible for the failed fusion and, with an act of authority bearing the stamp of Zinov'ev, took measures to change the leading group of the party. With Bordiga in prison, the Comintern Executive Committee designated Togliatti, Mauro Scoccimarro, Egidio Gennari Angelo Tasca and Umberto Terracini to lead the party: in other words a leading group favourable to fusion with the PSI. At the end of 1923, Bordiga proposed to the leaders of the party majority a letter in defence of the line the party had held, and in which the decisions of the International on the United Front question were criticized. Gramsci, who was in agreement with the line of the International, refused to sign the letter, broke with Bordiga and formed a new area in the centre between Bordiga's left and Tasca's right.

This forms the overall picture of the situation in which the *Correspondence* took place. We now pass on to look more closely at a number of significant passages of the correspondence itself. On 11 January 1923 Bordiga sent Gramsci a telegram (*Epistolario*, vol. 2, p. 9) warning him that an arrest warrant had been issued against him. In actual fact, the first arrest warrant against Gramsci was issued on 2 March by the examining magistrate in Teramo, but Bordiga, bearing in mind the provisional arrest of Grieco on 29 December, was of the opinion that the intention was to arrest the whole communist leadership. It was then Scoccimarro's letter of 2 March itself which informed Gramsci both of the arrest of Serrati and of the arrest warrant issued against him and the other two members of the Italian delegation at the International, all guilty of having signed the Comintern manifesto against fascism (*Epistolario*, vol. 2, *Appendix 1*, letters 20

and 24). In Italy there was, therefore, a police clamp-down that was taking place, which was aimed at the disintegration of the Party, already much put to the test by the immobility and sectarianism of the leading group. In his letters to the Executive Committee and Secretariat of the Comintern (*Epistolario*, vol. 2, *Appendix 1*, letters 25 and 26), Terracini deals with great effectiveness with the difficult situation faced by the communists in Italy, a situation described in even more concrete terms, if that is possible, in a letter of 13 February – the self-same day on which the letter was sent to the E.C. of the Comintern – to the Italian communist federation of the United States, in which one reads that “The fascist government has opened the great anti-communist hunt that had for some time been heralded” (published in *Alba Nuova*, organ of the Italian section of the Workers Party of America, III, no. 10, 17 March 1923). As part of this “anti-communist hunt”, Bordiga was arrested on 3 February and Serrati on 2 March, while warrants were issued for the arrest of the members of the Italian delegation to the International. All were committed to trial on 18 July, while the trial itself began in Rome on 18 October, concluding with the acquittal of all the accused on 26 October.

A second decisive moment that comes to the fore in the documents contained in the volume is the interlacing of conflicts inside the PCd'I at that precise historical moment. If, up to the Spring of 1923, Gramsci had preferred not to accentuate the differences with Bordiga, starting from the letter to Togliatti of 18 May 1923, war was declared on him (*Epistolario*, vol. 2, pp. 102-109). Gramsci began to indicate the communist leadership's ambiguity, shown in a number of attitudes they had taken towards the Comintern. These took on concrete form in what amounted to a provincialism which, in considering local factors to be pre-eminent, removed them from the necessary dialectic with international questions, thereby side-stepping one of the manifestations to which the Comintern Executive clung most of all. This was unanimity on voting which, on the one hand meant discipline and, on the other, deprived of contents the tendency to group around minorities. This ensemble of questions was proposed to the Italian party first of all in a letter (*Epistolario*, vol. 2, p. 122) replying to Togliatti who on 23 July 1923 had written to Gramsci, enclosing a

letter of Bordiga to Zinov'ev and Bukharin. Gramsci wrote expressing his distress at a situation in which the Party would soon be led by a minority "created by our errors and by our passivity"; the conclusion to the letter is bitter and almost disheartened: "... I have to confess to you that to me it is absolutely incomprehensible that revolutionaries, who are convinced of their programme, should abandon their post, which today, given the general situation, is a barricade to defend and not only against the enemies in front of us" (*ibid.*). Obviously linked with the letter quoted immediately above is the incomplete draft of a letter to Togliatti, dating to August 1923, and, for information, to all the comrades working with him, in which we read "We must get down to (...) concrete work, and demonstrate, through the Party's entire activity and a practical political engagement (*operosità politica*) that measures up to the Italian situation in Italy, that we are what we claim to be, rather than going on in the attitude adopted up to now of being 'misunderstood geniuses'"³ (*Epistolario*, vol. 2, *Appendix 2*, p. 582).

What does Gramsci mean here by *operosità politica* ["political engagement"]? In fact, in that period his political engagement was concentrated between, on the one hand, the involvement that the International demanded of him to create European centres of information on fascism and the fight against it (in Berlin and Vienna) and, on the other, the discussion that had arisen from the crisis of the leadership group of the Italian Party. As Togliatti noted in a letter of 13 August to the Secretariat of the Comintern (*Epistolario*, vol. 2, *Appendix 1*, p. 462), some of the Italian comrades wanted him to come back nearer to Italy. And indeed, on 20 August the PCd'I Executive indicated Berlin as his destination, meeting the firm opposition of Terracini who in the meantime had arrived in Moscow to take his place as a member of the Presidium of the International. And it was Terracini who underlined the precarious situation of the communist press, subjected as it was to closures by the Italian authorities. In this climate, Togliatti and his collaborators began publication in August of a weekly journal *Lo stato operaio*, printed in Milan in semi-clandestine conditions. Meanwhile the relations between the Comintern and the PSI were becoming more and more tense up to the definitive break,

³ See Antonio Gramsci. *A Great and Terrible World. The Pre-Prison Letters 1908-1926*, cit., p. 168.

given that the Italian Socialist Party was no longer willing to countenance in its ranks the existence of the Third Internationalists [those socialists, or *terzini* as they were called, in favour of the Third International – tr. note], with their own organ, *Pagine rosse* [“Red Pages”]. The journal’s editorial group, among who included Serrati, Fabrizio Maffi and Ezio Riboldi, were first suspended and then expelled. On 3 September, Togliatti wrote a long letter to the Comintern Executive Committee, in which he gave a detailed description of the situation and, indeed, pointed out that it was impossible to reach an agreement with the PSI, the Third Internationalist fraction, obviously, being excluding from this estimation (*Epistolario*, vol. 2, *Appendix* 1, pp. 489-96). On 5 September, Otto Kuusinen sent a letter to the Central Committee of the Communist Party and to the leadership committee of the *terzini*, communicating the Comintern Presidium’s decision that a daily newspaper should be published having two main aims: one of “counterbalancing the influence of ‘L’Avanti!’ among the masses” and the other of “being the common organ of the communists and *terzini* in view of a fusion between them” (*Epistolario*, vol. 2, pp. 128-9). On the question of the daily paper, see also letters 104 (Togliatti writing from Milan to the Comintern Secretariat on 10 September 1923, pp. 512-6) and 113 (Mauro Scoccimarro from Rome to the Comintern on 11 October 1923, pp. 562-3); both letters are included in *Appendix* 1 on the pages here indicated. On 12 September, Gramsci wrote from Moscow to the Executive Committee of the PCd’I, endorsing the Comintern’s indication of creating a daily and, above all, defining a number of cornerstones of what would become his successive methodological, theoretical and political framework: the Southern question, an original analysis of fascism, the overcoming of hardline sectarianism, and the search for a complex of political and social forces that would become the expression of a workers’ and peasants’ government. On the trade union problem, the internal commissions had to be conquered without pushing the situation so far as to create a split within the union. Over the whole of the letter hovers the spirit of one word that would assume a central value for Gramsci’s entire successive reflection: hegemony (*Epistolario*, vol. 2, pp. 126-28: on setting up the daily, see also letter 40, pp. 134-36).

On 21 September a new wave of arrests of communist leaders took place in Italy, temporarily interrupting the flow of letters between them and Gramsci, who arrived in Vienna on 4 December. At this point, the main problem became that of relations with Bordiga. (This will be dealt with in the next volume of the *Epistolario*, now in preparation.)

Letters 2, 8, 12, 13, 17, 18 and 35 are addressed to the Schucht sisters. As compared with previous editions, the revised dating and recipients of the letters are explained by one of the editors of this volume of the *Correspondence*, Maria Luisa Righi, in her article *Gramsci a Mosca tra amori e politica (1922-1923)* [*Gramsci in Moscow between Loves and Politics*], in “Studi Storici”, 52, no. 4, 2011, pp. 1001-32. In essence, before the start of his relationship with Julija, who became his partner and mother of his two children, Delio and Giuliano, Gramsci had had a relationship, or in some way a more than just friendly involvement, with Evgenija. The new factors coming into the analysis of the letters clear up much of the real relations between Gramsci and these two Schucht sisters; in this sense a particular significance is assumed by letter 12, whose recipient had previously been thought to be Julija, while in actual fact it was Evgenija, as is the case for letter 35, previously dated August 1922, but which now turns out to be August 1923, in that Gramsci first met Julija in September 1922, and thus could not have written to her in August of that same year.

As one may gather from what has been written here, this second volume of Gramsci's letters allows us, with greater adherence to the facts, to reconstruct the latter stage of his stay in Moscow and to come to a better understanding of the intensity of the political involvement of a man already subject to great physical stress. On the other hand, thanks to a painstaking operation of bringing documents to light, several hitherto little known facts regarding Gramsci's affections and love life then come to the fore. Putting these two aspects together, a picture emerges that one may call “total” in the sense of Gramsci the political animal, and Gramsci the man. It is exactly in the period covered by this second volume that, in all its complexity, the profile appears of a communist for whom public life, punishing in its own way in a moment of utmost crisis, was entirely devoted to the management of internal relations, subtle as a spider's web, and subjected to

the continual scrutiny of the Comintern leadership, with the goal of finding the best solution to the Italian question. This aspect was complemented by a private life aimed at seeking an “ubi consistam”, a place to stand, about which, writing about himself, he claimed that for him there existed an “absolute impossibility, almost a decree of fate, that I might be loved by someone” (*Epistolario*, vol. 2, p. 26).⁴

One particular aspect of the editorial work of the volume needs to be highlighted, that is the notes to each of the texts. It is precisely these notes that, in many ways, allow us to reconstruct Gramsci's development, removing any doubts and mysteries on the dating and collocation of the facts in their context. In this sense, it would be possible even to go back to write the history of the PCI in that precise historical stage, integrating the research carried out by Paolo Spriano through the documentation that has now been made available in this second volume of the *National Edition of Antonio Gramsci's Writings*.

⁴ Letter to Evgenija Schucht of 13 February 1923: see *A Great and Terrible World*, cit., p.132.

International Gramsci Journal

Volume 2
Issue 4 *Readings and Applications of Gramsci /*
The National Edition of Gramsci's Writings

Article 11

2018

Giancarlo de Vivo: Nella bufera del Novecento: Antonio Gramsci e Piero Sraffa tra lotta politica e teoria critica [In the Storm of the Twentieth Century. Antonio Gramsci and Piero Sraffa between Political Struggle and Critical Theory] (in English)

Nerio Naldi

Follow this and additional works at: <https://ro.uow.edu.au/gramsci>

Recommended Citation

Naldi, Nerio, Giancarlo de Vivo: Nella bufera del Novecento: Antonio Gramsci e Piero Sraffa tra lotta politica e teoria critica [In the Storm of the Twentieth Century. Antonio Gramsci and Piero Sraffa between Political Struggle and Critical Theory] (in English), *International Gramsci Journal*, 2(4), 2018, 171-178.

Available at: <https://ro.uow.edu.au/gramsci/vol2/iss4/11>

Research Online is the open access institutional repository for the University of Wollongong. For further information contact the UOW Library: research-pubs@uow.edu.au

Giancarlo de Vivo: Nella bufera del Novecento: Antonio Gramsci e Piero Sraffa tra lotta politica e teoria critica [In the Storm of the Twentieth Century. Antonio Gramsci and Piero Sraffa between Political Struggle and Critical Theory] (in English)

Abstract

This book review discusses the recent volume of Giancarlo de Vivo, which offers a documented reconstruction of the role of the economist Piero Sraffa as the link between the prisoner Gramsci and the Italian Communist Party leadership in exile. Sraffa is shown to have acted autonomously of the party when Gramsci's wishes, as expressed in two letters in particular to his sister-in-law, Tat'jana, were for caution to be adopted in regard to the leadership's positions. There is also an analysis and defence of Sraffa's position in regard to the controversial 1928 letter from a party leader abroad (Grieco), before Gramsci was sentenced, which the prisoner considered to have worsened his position. This seems not to be true, but what did worsen attempts to ameliorate his position was publication in translation in *L'Humanité* of Professor Aracangeli's medical report on him. The stances of Sraffa and Gramsci on questions regarding the nature of historical materialism and the philosophy of praxis are taken into consideration, as are the first steps taken by Sraffa in formulating his challenge to the dominant neo-classical school in economics, an opposition which found its greatest expression in Sraffa's 1960 volume, *Production of Commodities by Means of Commodities* (*Produzione di merci a mezzo di merci*).

Keywords

Relations Gramsci-Sraffa-PCI leadership; attempts to reduce sentence; letter from Grieco; philosophy of praxis; challenge to neo-classical economics

Gramsci e Sraffa tra lotta politica e teoria critica

Nerio Naldi

Giancarlo de Vivo's volume¹ contributes to reconstructing basic aspects of the biographies of Piero Sraffa and Antonio Gramsci and the events that bound them together during Gramsci's imprisonment. In this brief review we shall deal with four subject matters which the book goes into in depth in its two main chapters and their appendices.

The first of these is the reconstruction of the role of Sraffa as the link between Gramsci and the foreign centre of the Communist Party of Italy (PCd'I or PCI) during Gramsci's years in prison. In this context the contribution made by de Vivo's book allows us to confute certain undocumented claims which over the last few years have gone so far as to describe Sraffa as a functionary of the PCI or of the Comintern with a task of surveillance over Gramsci, as a person whom Gramsci did not trust, or even as Gramsci's gaoler rather than his friend. de Vivo singles out decisive elements which allow us to reconstruct Sraffa's line of conduct, characterized by absolute faithfulness to Gramsci, even when faced with the critical position that he – Gramsci – had assumed regarding the way that the PCI leaders had managed relations with him, the imprisoned head of the Party. In particular de Vivo's research allows us to conclude that Sraffa, as explicitly requested by Gramsci, did not transmit to the foreign centre of the PCI copies of two crucial letters that Gramsci addressed to his sister-in-law, Tat'jana Schucht, on 5 December 1932 and 27 February 1933, asking that they should remain reserved for her and for the *advocate* – namely Piero Sraffa.² (This request was contained only in the

¹ *Nella bufera del Novecento: Antonio Gramsci e Piero Sraffa tra lotta politica e teoria critica (In the Storm of the Twentieth Century. Antonio Gramsci and Piero Sraffa between Political Struggle and Critical Theory)*, Castelveccchi, Roma, 2017.

² In English in *Letters from Prison*, Vol. II, ed. Frank Rosenberg and trans. Raymond Rosenthal, pp. 236-9 and 274-8 respectively. Rosenberg and Rosenthal specify in an endnote to the letter of 13 February 1933 (p. 271) that in their translation the code word *avvocato*, rendered as "attorney", is Piero Sraffa both there and thenceforward; and elsewhere in the *Prison Letters*, where not otherwise specified (e.g. as the "military attorney"), Sraffa is usually meant. [tr. note.]

27 February letter. The 5 December letter which, in all probability, Tat'jana transmitted to Sraffa only when they met in Rome between 8 and 11 January 1933, was initially held back, it may safely be said after assessment of its content, even if it did not contain an explicit indication in this sense; this indication did come from Gramsci in response to a request for clarification by Tat'jana during her prison visit to Gramsci on 19 January, and Sraffa was informed of this in Tat'jana's letter to him of 11 February.)

de Vivo reaches these conclusions by analysing the available documents of use for reconstructing how the original of Gramsci's letters and their copies were sent out of Italy and the ways and extent to which, in the years of fascism, these reached the foreign centre of the PCd'I and Togliatti; or then how, after 1945, they arrived in the hands of Togliatti and the leading cadres of the PCI who were successively involved in their publication. These constitute important elements which up to now have not received sufficient attention. To this same end, it is of great importance to have it documented that in 1974 Sraffa was still in possession of a good number of the copies of the letters, made by Tat'jana Schucht and sent by her regularly to Sraffa, that Gramsci had written to her in 1933. In particular, as well as the copies of the letters of 5 December 1932 and 27 February 1933, Sraffa also had in his possession the copies of the letters written by Gramsci from the end of April to mid-July and from the end of September to mid-November, while after 1933 Gramsci's letters were very few in number. He also had those letters that Tat'jana wrote to him, beginning with the ones of 19 January and 11 February 1933, in which she outlined to Sraffa the content of a number of the conversations she had had in prison with Gramsci and of requests that he himself made, that the PCI foreign centre should not be informed.

In addition to these observations we may add that the data collected by de Vivo allow us to state that, while having kept to himself the copies of the letters of 5 December 1932 and 27 February 1933, Sraffa then continued once more regular transmission to the PCI foreign centre the copies of others of Gramsci's letters, even if they might mention the contents of the two preceding ones (here one should bear in mind Gramsci's letter to Tat'jana of 6 March 1933). It therefore

seems that Sraffa intended to follow Gramsci's precise indications scrupulously. However in May 1933, i.e. immediately after the publication in *L'Humanité* of the medical report prepared by Prof. Arcangeli after he had examined Gramsci in prison, Sraffa interrupted transmission of the letters, in all probability doing so this time without any indication from Gramsci.

The publication in *L'Humanité* – we are unable to state with any certainty if and when Gramsci came to know of it – caused “a disaster” (to use Sraffa's words). It blocked the attempts that Sraffa had begun to obtain a substantial reduction of Gramsci's sentence, this being the substance of the legal action undertaken in March 1933 before the Special Tribunal by the advocate-attorney, Saverio Castellet. Sraffa's non-transmission of the copies of the letters of Gramsci that reached him after the publication of Professor Arcangeli's report may therefore be interpreted as a reaction to that publication.³

After this interruption, it may be inferred that Sraffa again began to transmit to the PCI foreign centre the copies of Gramsci's letters, handing over those of the period from the middle of July to the end of September 1933. These were the copies of letters that he had received from Tat'jana while he was in Italy on his summer vacation, and most probably Sraffa consigned them personally to the PCI foreign centre in France on his way back to England. Transmission of copies of the letters was again interrupted in the succeeding months, when Sraffa was in England, and again in December when he returned to Italy for his winter holidays, he did not hand them over. On this occasion too, we may associate the non-consignment to a “disaster”, once again using Sraffa's words: at the beginning of December Angelo Sraffa had informed his son Piero of the seizure, presumably in July or August, of a circular regarding the attitude to be adopted by imprisoned communists when faced with the possibility of requesting conditional liberty. This seizure blocked definitively the attempt that had been initiated through Castellet, and it is reasonable to suppose that Sraffa,

³ Arcangeli's report is cited almost in its entirety in English in Alastair Davidson's *Antonio Gramsci: Towards an Intellectual Biography*, London, Merlin Press, 1977 (reprint Amsterdam, Brill, 2017), p. 284. [tr. note.]

taking into account the fact that the foreign centre of the PCI, also, was aware that the fascist police had been able to infiltrate the structures of all the anti-fascist organizations, maintained that on such a delicate question channels of information should have been managed more prudently.

The second subject that de Vivo deals with is contained in the appendix to the first chapter, which, in essence, repropose the lines of his research, published in 2009, on the position taken by Sraffa on Ruggero Grieco's letter of February 1928, on Gramsci's interpretation of it, and on the initiatives that Tat'jana promised to undertake on her return to the USSR after Gramsci's death.

In the pages of this appendix, de Vivo gives the complete lie to the inferences of those who have claimed that Sraffa was playing a double game and who have described him as the feigned friend of Gramsci, pretending to share his theses and his worries but, after his death, being ready to reverse his position and put himself on the opposite side – the one on which Gramsci maintained obstacles had been placed to the first attempts to obtain his release.

de Vivo's lines of argument demolish the two mainstays of these inferences. The first is the claim that Sraffa expressed two contrary judgments on Grieco's letter: one in 1928 which was decidedly negative (defining it as "criminal") and another, more moderate, one in 1937 (defining it as an "imprudence"). The second mainstay is the claim that, at the end of the 1960s, in order to free himself from a weight on his conscience, Sraffa returned to his 1928 position, describing the letter as the cause of a "disaster".

On the first of these claims, de Vivo demonstrates that the 1928 judgment, which Tat'jana Schucht reported to Gramsci, could not have been expressed by Sraffa and that, in effect and inevitably, there is no evidence that he had so expressed it. On the second claim, de Vivo demonstrates that the two disasters to which Sraffa refers had no connection with Grieco's letter and, as already seen, are both to be dated to 1933.

The second part of de Vivo's book opens with a presentation of Sraffa through the lens of his intellectual relationships with two of the most important representatives of twentieth-century European culture, John Maynard Keynes and Ludwig Wittgenstein. There follows an illustration of the most significant stages of his intellectual, economic and political formation, and how these were intertwined with Gramsci's political activity through a succession of periods in which their meetings were either more, or less, frequent, up to the year of Gramsci's arrest in 1926. From here, de Vivo goes on to illustrate two equally interesting points: the positions on which Marxism and the dominant economic theory were based in the first decades of the last century and the way in which one fundamental aspect regarding the interpretation of Marxism was shared in common by both Sraffa and Gramsci. If the dividing line between Marxism and the dominant economic theory could be associated with a distinction between the theory of value and the theory of prices, indicating – as belonging to the former – subject matters that are different from the more direct explanation of the prices of single commodities and their variations (this being an approach that one can recognize in notes prepared by Sraffa in summer 1927), that distinction saw Marxism as substantially marginalized and excluded from the main core of economic theory and self-limited to the sphere of the study of the dynamics of the system and its laws of motion. And exactly in the context defined by the great themes of historical materialism (an expression that, in Gramsci's use of it, Sraffa would suggest considering as a synonym for Marxism) and of the Marxist reading of economic and social dynamics (as well, obviously, as in the subject matters of everyday politics), de Vivo singles out the horizon of the conversations and discussions, known to be both long and impassioned, that Gramsci and Sraffa engaged in between 1924 and 1926.

This context is defined by de Vivo by means of an extremely interesting reconstruction that allows us to approach Sraffa's view of the meaning of historical materialism. Although Sraffa wrote little on this, even after taking into account the unpublished manuscript material in his archive, precise indications regarding his non-deterministic vision may be found from a reading of the booklet,

Marxism To-Day, published by Maurice Dobb in 1932 and by succeeding interventions by Dobb himself in defence of his own position, which was subjected to very harsh attacks by the guardians of the Marxist orthodoxy that prevailed within the Communist Party of Great Britain. From these documents it turns out that Sraffa had discussed and contributed to the elaboration of Dobb's text and shared its content and the non-deterministic way in which the relationships between "ideal" and "material" events had been framed;⁴ these were subjects that are to be found in Gramsci's approach, and which link up with two manuscripts of Sraffa's dating to 1942, reproduced in the documentary appendix to de Vivo's book.

The volume ends in this same documentary appendix with the publication of some of Sraffa's writings dating from 1921 and 1927. One of these, the text of a lecture given by Sraffa in 1927 on the subject of the fascist corporative State, is unpublished, while the others are the three articles of his published in *L'Ordine Nuovo* in 1921. Before this appendix, however, de Vivo devotes a number of pages to the role played by Marx in the development of Sraffa's thought, or, more precisely, to the role that his reading of some of Marx's texts, in particular the *Storia delle dottrine economiche* [in English *Theories of Surplus Value*] and the study of the schemes of reproduction contained in the second book of *Capital*, may have had in defining the first steps that he took towards working out the sets of equations that constitute the central core of his 1960 volume *Production of Commodities by Means of Commodities*. There are various indications that lead us to think that Sraffa began working out these equations in England in the autumn of 1927 and, thus, at a time when it was not possible for him to have any exchange of ideas with Gramsci. We do however know that, before his arrest, Gramsci already possessed an edition of the French translation *Histoire des doctrines économiques*, published in 1924-25. It would not therefore seem strange, even if we have no information on this score, that Gramsci and Sraffa may have spoken of the content of this book. In actual fact however de Vivo's attention is not turned towards researching into a possible exchange of ideas on these themes between Gramsci and Sraffa, but to indicating a possible line of autonomous

⁴ See Maurice Dobb, *On Marxism To-Day*, London, The Hogarth Press, 1932, p. 14. [tr. note.]

development of Sraffa's thought stemming from his reading of the first chapters of the *Histoire des doctrines économiques* and of parts of the second book of *Capital*. This is a line of development that, in de Vivo's view, would have led him to conceiving his set of equations.

On this point, our opinions differ. My own point of view is that, while it is obvious to recognize that Marx was always a reference point of primary importance for Sraffa, this does not mean that the very first steps towards working out the set of equations that we then find in *Production of Commodities* were taken by following an inspiration originating in Marx. The way in which de Vivo reaches this conclusion regarding the origin of Sraffa's equations is based on the identification of a similarity between certain descriptions of the physiocratic approach contained in the *Histoire des doctrines économiques*, Marx's schemes of reproduction, and the first equations written down by Sraffa. However, beyond these similarities the manuscripts datable to autumn-winter 1927 conserved among the Sraffa Papers do not allow us to document in concrete terms a link between that hypothetical source of inspiration and Sraffa's original draft of his equations. A manuscript dated 26 November 1927, in which Sraffa claims that his work will lead to a reformulation of Marx's theories, is clearly successive to the draft of his first equations, which that same day he showed to Keynes. This statement of his does not therefore indicate a genealogy of the equations, but a programme of work stemming from them.

In actual fact, if no useful evidence for reconstructing the genealogy of Sraffa's equations may be recognized in the Sraffa Papers, in order to explain their origin one can do nothing other than have recourse to the clues put forward as similarities like those indicated by de Vivo. However some items of evidence are recognizable and direct us along a different path, in which Marx has a role, on a level with other classical economists, although only as part of an approach to the explanation of exchange values founded on objective parameters. On this basis, in a document prepared in the summer of 1927, Sraffa outlines the possibility of reducing the value of a commodity to the quantity of an "absolutely necessary commodity" which is directly and indirectly used in its production. But this way of posing the question,

which Sraffa explicitly applies in interpreting the thought of David Ricardo, was immediately recognized by him as analytically insufficient. It could lead to a precise and analytically justified result only in the particular case of a community that produces solely what is just sufficient for reproducing itself. However negative this conclusion may be, in our view it is from here that there stems the attention paid by Sraffa to the case of an economic system in conditions of simple subsistence. And this is the specific evidence, found in the Sraffa Papers which brings us most closely into contact with the first set of equations written by Sraffa, a set of simultaneous equations which describe§ the material conditions of the reproduction of a community whose net product is expressed in physical terms and is equal to zero. This set may therefore have been written by Sraffa as the first step towards calculating the quantity of an “absolutely necessary commodity” directly and indirectly employed in the production of any commodity whatever. But in writing this set, one may argue that it appeared obvious to Sraffa that there was the possibility of determining exchange ratios through its resolution and for that reason he immediately abandoned the attempts to reduce the value of any other commodity to an “absolutely necessary commodity”. The new perspective that unexpectedly opened up before him induced him to extend that set of simultaneous equations to the case of an economy that produces a positive net product – and this is what we find in the manuscripts contained in the Sraffa Papers. At the same time, Sraffa could see how these sets of equations assumed characteristics typical of the physiocratic approach (namely the representation of the production process in physical terms and as a circular process), which had fallen into neglect and to which even Marx had referred only in some isolated passage in his *Theories of Surplus Value*.