

**LET US RETAKE
GRAMSCI ON THE
BASIS OF MAOISM**



NUOVA EGEMONIA



LET US RETAKE GRAMSCI ON THE BASIS OF MAOISM

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1. THE CONTRIBUTIONS OF ANTONIO GRAMSCI

Gramsci was the greatest Marxist-Leninist in our country. In addition to being the de facto founder of the Communist Party of Italy he also led, as far as he could, this party in the struggle for socialism. He also made important contributions to a Marxist vision of the fundamental questions of the proletarian revolution in Italy. This has occurred in important fields of theory and ideology: from history to economics, from philosophy to political theory, from military art to cultural politics.

After the end of the Second World War, on all of these terrains, the hegemony of the liberal and revisionist reactionary intellectual ideological bloc has prevailed, in the working class and among progressive intellectuals. This bloc has tried in every way to distort the Marxist conception of our country's history and has fought against the revolutionary contributions made by Gramsci.

The intellectuals of the "new left" of the Sixties and Seventies proposed, in particular with the "*operaismo*", a sociological and reformist interpretation of the Italian reality. This interpretation too denied Gramsci's revolutionary ideological and theoretical contributions.

It is necessary, however, to point out that in those years, even the important Marxist-Leninist tendency did not manage to

make a real break with the revisionism of Togliatti's PCI. Thus, even this tendency was not able to give a revolutionary view of Gramsci's theory and practice.

Gramsci cannot be taken back unless he is brought up to date in a critical manner. To be able to do this it is necessary to start from the development achieved by Maoism considered as the current form of Marxism.

2. A WORK PROGRAMME ON THE *PRISON NOTEBOOKS*

The work we propose starts from the need to critically take up a series of contributions by Gramsci and represents today one of the conditions for the elaboration of an appropriate paradigm for the proletarian revolution in Italy.

With this project, our intention is not to work on the construction of another political group, but rather to make a contribution to the development of a Maoist tendency capable, through a process of "struggle, critique and transformation", of leading to construction of the party.

Faced with the erroneous positions or ideological shortcomings of the various forces of the extreme left, we are against those who claim to have already built the party of the Italian proletariat.

We are in particular against the superficial and eclectic point of view that thinks it can build the party with unionism, movimentism, political tacticism and dogmatic propagandism.

We are in essence against the logic that denies the need to apply Maoism in order to form something capable of responding to the problems of the proletarian revolution in Italy.

At the same time we oppose the nostalgic of the experiences and movements of the sixties and seventies. The nostalgic of those years do not want to combine the positive lessons of the great revolutionary experiences of workers' struggle, students and popular with the critique of the theoretical and ideological conceptions of all those forces and tendencies who proclaimed themselves (in one way or another) Marxist. All these forces and tendencies were, in fact, directly or indirectly opposed to Maoism. The consequence was that the energies of the advanced sectors of the proletariat and the popular masses were dispersed. This has opened the way to a political and ideological defeat that still weighs heavily today. Despite the vast revolutionary movement, they have not even been able to build the first nucleus of the party of the proletariat.

As the New Hegemony blog, as militant proletarian intellectuals who are not part of the generation of classes and political groups from the Sixties and Seventies, we address today, first and foremost, the workers, the petty-intellectuals, the members of the popular masses, and the sincere revolutionaries.

We want to address all those who, starting from the background of anti-fascism, anti-racism and the fight against

capitalism, seek a new way, want to build the communist party and are not willing to retrace old failed roads.

We want to work with those who, in a situation of political and ideological difficulty and widespread passivity of the working class and popular masses, do not let themselves become fascinated by the movementist, tactical and anarcho-syndicalist logic and instead want to tackle the task of building an initial embryo of a party on the basis of Maoism.

To this end, we consider it necessary to propose a first phase focused on study, training and self-training on the theoretical and ideological level, on political orientation and on propaganda among workers, students and the most exploited sectors of the popular masses.

Within the framework of these aims we think it is necessary to propose Gramsci again, in a critical and current manner, his most original and revolutionary contributions. To this end, we identify a number of issues to which we shall devote the following paragraphs.

3. THE FORMATION AND STRUCTURE OF ITALIAN CAPITALISM

We must start from the fact that, after the Second World War, the liberal and revisionist intellectual bloc conquered in Italy

the theoretical hegemony in its interpretation of the processes of formation of Italian capitalism.

It was argued that Italian capitalism had become similar to that of the main European countries. It was argued that the Risorgimento, which culminated in the unification of Italy in 1861, had fulfilled the function of a bourgeois democratic revolution. It was felt that after the end of World War II, the road had opened to a full development of industrial capitalism, to a rapid overcoming of the peasant question and to the establishment of a true form of bourgeois democracy.

The intellectual circles and groups of the extreme left in the early 1960s did not shake so much this hegemony. On the contrary, they contributed to adding further theoretical and ideological superstructures that have only taken to the extreme both the liberal and the revisionist point of view of the PCI of Togliatti.

The conceptions of the so-called "new left", who had the hegemony at the beginning of the Sixties in Italy, were promoted and development by political and intellectual cadres who had been leaders of the left of Christian Democracy (DC), Italian Socialist Party (PSI) and Italian Communist Party (PCI). These were never really Marxists. Their conceptions in general were openly opposed to Maoism, but in some cases they also proposed a narrow and liquidatory

vision of the "thought of Mao", in others fanciful and caricatural².

Thus, even in the extreme left in those decades, a point of view took hold that tended to confuse the nature of Italian capitalism with that of other European countries and the USA.

These conceptions continue to weigh heavily today. Together with other concepts of the same type, they hinder the analysis of social classes and the understanding of the specific characteristics of the Italian crisis. They do not consider the particularities of the productive structure of our country. They do not see Italy as a marginal imperialist country today. They do not recognise that the peasant question has been transformed into the problem of the economic and social condition of the lower and middle strata of the petty bourgeoisie. They consider the Southern and Island Question and the Vatican Question to be outdated and resolved.

In short, they are incapable of deeply understanding the question of the struggle for the hegemony of the proletariat over the popular masses in our country.

Equally, they do not see the relationship between the construction of this hegemony and the development of the revolutionary process. In this way, the understanding of the class relations, of the basic laws of the proletarian revolution

¹ Such as in the case of the Pcdi(m-l) and all the forces that emerged from its successive divisions.

² In particular, the group "Serving the People" of Brandirali, which in the early seventies became the PC(M-L)I-Voice of the workers and transform itself immediately into an eclectic current of the "operaismo", ending up melting into the "autonomia operaia".

in Italy and of the tasks of the sincere revolutionaries and of the vanguard workers is still hindered.

4. ON THE PARADIGM OF THE PROLETARIAN REVOLUTION IN ITALY

In addition to the questions related to the content concerning the analysis of classes and the specific laws of the revolution in our country, we must ask the question of the form of the revolution. Considering both the question of content and form, we speak of the problem of the paradigm of the Italian revolution to indicate the question of the need for a specific theory of the revolution in Italy.

From the point of view of content, therefore, it is the question of the characteristics of capitalism and the State, from which the structural limits derive, the historical nodes and contradictions that define the specific conditions and laws of the proletarian revolution in our country. The most complete and consequent consideration of those contradictions must, however, be translated into the question of the study of the forms of revolution. This study is primarily inherent in the assumption of the relative universal contributions of Maoism, secondly, it is related to the synthesis of the historical experience of the International Communist Movement, considered from the experience of the Chinese Revolution and the popular wars conducted by the Maoist parties, thirdly, it is linked to the balance sheet of the revolutionary struggles in the imperialist countries and particularly in Italy. Let us

consider this third point with regard to the question of Gramsci's contributions.

To solve the problem of the relationship between the content and forms of revolution, a correct assessment of the class struggle in Italy is needed, specifically Risorgimento to the two-year red period (1919-1920), the anti-fascist struggle and the partisan war, up to the experiences of the revolutionary struggles of the 1970s. In Gramsci, we can find in this regard important contributions to the creative application of Marxism-Leninism to the Italian reality of those times. In Gramsci we find, for example, the important thesis of overcoming the insurrectional strategy of the October Revolution, concerning the initial taking of the main urban centers. Gramsci notes that in the 1930s, the majority of large and medium-sized urban centres were not characterised by the predominance of the proletariat. Drawing on this fact, on the experience of the positive and negative lessons of the class struggle in Italy and on considerations inherent in the specific nature of the Italian State, Gramsci introduces a new theory, that of the widespread insurrection. This theory is accompanied in Gramsci by two basic issues. The first is the tactics of the "*arditi del popolo*". Gramsci emphasises in this regard the distinction with the insurrectional model of the October Revolution and affirms the need for an original development of the tactics of the "*arditi del popolo*". Gramsci in this regard brilliantly points out that this problem and this need arise from a situation characterized by the reactionary "war of position" that is a situation characterized by the political, military, economic and ideological offensive of the

imperialist State against the proletariat and the popular classes.

The second question relates to Gramsci's hints, both on the basis of the experience of "India" and on the basis of the experience of the Risorgimento, to a theory of the "mixed war", that is to say the combination and unification between the "war of position" of the proletariat and the revolutionary "war of movement". This theory also seems to anticipate current problems and conceptions concerning the vision of the "great strategy" of the revolution as a people's war that unified the whole of the different plans of the class struggle 8^{3,4,5}.

These two theories of Gramsci, together with other important considerations, can be read not only as a set of current indications in those years for the fight against fascism, but also as important anticipations that have found further significant development in the experience of the anti-fascist partisan war. On the theoretical level these indications are then seen

³ The "arditi del popolo", born in 1921, were a national association of revolutionary groups that undertook many armed actions against the fascists.

⁴In fact Gramsci was referring to the experience of the Chinese revolution, already fully underway in those years and repeatedly the subject of debate and intervention in the Third International. Obviously for Gramsci, who was in prison, it was not possible to speak directly about the revolution in China. In order to talk about it, he had to do it indirectly and then give the impression of wanting to talk about India. Fascism was in fact at that time in strong competition with England, which in those years oppressed India.

⁵*Prison notebooks, Notebook 13, paragraph 17.*

as partial transitional rings towards the Maoist theory of the universality of the People's War.

5. ON THE CATEGORY OF REACTIONARY "PASSIVE REVOLUTION"

Gramsci also proposes another new category, that of reactionary "passive revolution". This is an issue that presents a particular complexity in Gramsci and therefore requires special critical attention in order to identify what may be the actual contributions and what may be the most problematic aspects.

Gramsci tackles the issue at different levels. The first is surely that of the reference to the contradiction between the development of productive forces and relations of production and to Marx's Preface to "For the Critique of Political Economy". Here Gramsci proposes a first level of structural foundation of the category of the "passive revolution" as an expression of the bourgeoisie's attempt to resolve, even in an increasingly reactionary way, the contradiction between the relations of production and the development of the productive forces. The theme is then dealt with by Gramsci in close connection with the theory of imperialism and with that of the crisis of capitalism.

On the question of the 'general crisis' of capitalism, Gramsci compares the phase of decadence, crisis and decay of

feudalism with the terminal phase of imperialism. In this way he comes close to the Maoist thesis of the end of imperialism within a few centuries.

This is also the basis from which Gramsci starts to support the thesis that imperialism is characterized by a persistent reactionary offensive (position war) against the proletariat and the popular masses and therefore by a close succession in the time of reactionaries "passive revolutions" of different types (from fascism to social democracy) according to the struggle against the tendency to revolution.

In general, it can be argued that in this way Gramsci draws close to other presuppositions of Maoism and the theory of the universality of the People's War. Gramsci takes up this category also with respect to the 1930s, in relation to the question of the difference between the economic and state forms linked to "Americanism" and those more typically European compared to which Italian fascism was a peripheral case.

Gramsci also expands on the concept of "passive revolution" with respect to the question of the passage in Italy from feudalism to capitalism, laying the foundations for a Marxist interpretation of the specific characteristics of capitalism and the Italian State.

From this, in fact, follows a close relationship, in Gramsci, between the theories of the "war of position" and the passive revolution" and that of the new characteristics of the Modern State (imperialist State). In the Modern State, an important role, in a reactionary sense, is played by "civil society", which occurs as a dimension of the bourgeois State.

In this context, Gramsci attaches great importance to the question of the role of intellectuals and their role in civil society organisations and institutions. Reactionary intellectuals seek to build an articulated, solid and flexible system for the management of social and political contradictions, in order to prolong the passivity and disintegration of the broad masses, to avoid the affirmation of the ideology of revolutionary Marxism (Maoism), to prevent the formation of a real communist party and to hinder the construction of a mass revolutionary ideological and political bloc.

This articulation of the level of Gramsci's reasoning on the question of passive revolutions is also present in the *Prison Notebooks* in relation to simpler and more distant degrees and forms in time, in relation to historical periods that preceded the formation of the unitary State. In this way, it represents one of the keys to a Marxist vision of the historical phases of Humanism and the Renaissance.

Gramsci's contributions to the question of the struggle for hegemony and the "war of position" of the proletariat, in their indissoluble dialectic with that of the revolutionary "war of movement", would be difficult to understand without consideration of the question of passive revolutions and the reactionary role played at different levels of social and political life by the various layers and classes of bourgeois and petty-bourgeois "intellectuals".

6. "WAR OF POSITION" AND "WAR OF MOVEMENT"

Like the concept of passive revolution, even that of "position war" is presented as a category of considerable complexity, as a point of intersection of different theoretical conceptions and therefore requires special critical attention.

The treatment of the categories of "war of position" and "war of movement" in political theory develops, in Gramsci, through different levels of theoretical abstraction and relationship with the related categories of military art.

Here it is sufficient to refer to the following: the theory of the "war of position" is understood by Gramsci first of all as a representation of a configuration, typical in the era of imperialism, pertaining to class relations at an economic-social, ideological, political and military level, characterised by a permanent offensive against the proletariat and the popular masses. According to Gramsci, this configuration would be based on the development of the crisis of imperialism and the changed nature of the state, starting from a higher degree of fusion between economics and politics and as a result of the enlargement of the reactionary state itself to include the entire bourgeois 'civil society'. As far as the paradigm and

theory of the proletarian revolution are concerned, the consequence is that of the emergence of the question of ideology and politics as a decisive lever for the transformation in a revolutionary sense of the class struggle, with the consequent possibility of the development and affirmation of the revolutionary "war of movement".

The concept of "position war" is thus used by Gramsci not only to indicate the reactionary "position war" of the bourgeoisie against the proletariat, but also, secondly, to indicate the struggle for the hegemony of the proletariat in its indissoluble connection with the question of the "war of movement".

The "war of position" of the proletariat in Gramsci denotes the theoretical, ideological, political and cultural struggle for hegemony, while the "war of movement" refers to the development of the revolutionary process and the question of the form of revolution.

Alongside the "war of position" and the "war of movement" of the proletariat, but more than anything as an initial and elementary grade, Gramsci also maintains a third form relating to partial political battles (e.g. the struggle against bourgeois governments) the economic and trade union struggle and the struggle for reforms and immediate improvements. To wit, Gramsci speaks in *Notebook 13* of "three degrees of the situation of class relations". In fact, however, with the formation of an effective communist party, this third form ends up being subordinated to the overall initiative of the "war of position" of the proletariat and its dialectic with the "war of movement".

The “position war” of the proletariat is centred for Gramsci on the struggle for the construction of the hegemony of the working class in the relationship with the lower and intermediate sectors of the petit-bourgeois masses and on the disintegration of the consensus and ideological influence of the forces of reactionary civil society (reactionary unions, bourgeois parties, reformist, opportunist and petty-bourgeois revolutionary forces, etc.) on the popular masses.

Theoretical and ideological struggle, cultural politics, etc. thus come, in Gramsci, to interlink organically with the independent political initiative of the proletariat.

Gramsci also emphasises that one of the objectives of this independent political initiative is the development of a politics of class alliances for the construction of the revolutionary popular front led by the proletariat.

This type of independent initiative must then, according to Gramsci also be combined, as and when necessary, with the construction of relationships with opposing reactionary forces (popular parties and movements, Social Democrats, reformists and revolutionary petty-bourgeois, reactionary and alternative trade unions, etc.) that are formally anti-fascist have the capacity to attract the popular masses, on the political, economic and trade union level.

In this case the goal of this specific policy of relations becomes for Gramsci, relying on the direct experience of the masses, that of dismantling the capacity of these reactionary forces to reproduce their influence on sectors of the proletariat and popular masses. The relationship between independent autonomous initiative, also aimed at the formation of a

revolutionary front and policies aimed at building possible relations with opposing forces, is therefore presented as particularly complex⁶.

Gramsci, however, seems to consider the development of the "war of position" aimed at the beginning of the revolutionary "war of movement" as a long-term process while, conversely, the "war of movement" would be concentrated in much shorter times. This was probably a consequence of the fact that in those years these problems were presented for the first time and could not therefore be set up properly yet.

In this, Gramsci therefore remains still within the framework of the conceptions typical of the second stage of Marxism, that characterized by Marxism-Leninism. A stage that, however, perhaps already since the conduct of the civil war in Spain, from the promulgation of the 1936 constitution which affirmed the overcoming of the class struggle in the USSR and from the innovative but structurally deficient turn of the VII Congress of the Communist International, was beginning to require a further qualitative development of Marxism-Leninism itself, a process then nonetheless fully underway in China.

Among the many issues to be considered is the fact that after the early 1920s the bourgeoisie learned to counter with increasing effectiveness even the front policies implemented by the Communist Parties of the Third International with some

⁶One need only think of the indications of the Seventh Congress of the Communist International for a policy of confrontation with certain types of reactionary parties or the masterly policy of confrontation conducted by Mao Tse Tung with the reactionary government of Chiang Kai-shek.

bourgeois and social-democratic parties. The consequence was that the proletariat in Italy and other European countries was defeated during and especially immediately after the end of the Second World War not only because of revisionism, but also because of a deficient development of Marxism-Leninism.

It is no longer conceivable to implement a policy of confrontation with opposing sectors over an extended period of time.

It is above all the relationship between the "war of position" and the "war of movement" that has changed since the times of Gramsci. Today, this dialectical relationship appears to be thematisable as a scientifically-calibrated expansive circulation and therefore no longer as a problem of succession between a protracted stage of war of position and a subsequent conclusive stage concentrated in time.

The theory of the position war and the "passive revolutions" and their relationship with the "movement war", however, remains a great contribution of Gramsci in part still current. In general it is a contribution that also allows us to glimpse an Italian translation of some often overlooked theoretical-political dimensions of Maoism, such as that relating to the universality of the theory of the Maoist People's War or that of the start of the process of construction of the new state even before the destruction of the reactionary one. Hence the need, in the development of the circular dialectic between

'war of position' and 'war of movement', for the construction of alternative popular power^{7,8}.

7. AGAINST THE MOVEMENTIST PARADIGM

Trotskyism, councilism, Bordighism and anarcho-syndicalism are ideological and political tendencies foreign to Marxism-Leninism and critically considered by Gramsci both in their specificity and because they can be united within the same economicist and movementist paradigm of proletarian revolution.

⁷ Taking up Lenin's metaphor on the need to translate the Russian language (that is, the experience of the October Revolution, then of a universal nature) into a language comprehensible in the West, (identifying for this purpose the mediations necessary to give concrete life and political effectiveness to the universal theory of Leninism in Western countries).

⁸ Commonly identified, in a grossly empiricist way, with the form of peasant war and the encirclement of cities by the countryside and rejected as inapplicable in imperialist countries that, of course, they no longer have a peasant class of significant size.

These tendencies are the bearers of a vulgar materialist, sociologistic, mechanistic and scientific or subjectivist and irrationalist conception, which denies or conceives in an extremely reductive way the question of materialist dialectics and therefore the fundamental questions of the theory of knowledge, logic and method of Marxism⁹.

The theoretical and political consequences are related to the negation of the problems of class alliances and of the "war of position for hegemony" as a lever for the development of the revolutionary process. These tendencies are criticized by Gramsci because they place at the centre to the struggle for "demands", the economic-social struggle and the struggle against the measures of the various bourgeois governments, as the engine of the process of political and social transformation.

Thus, every real dialectic between "war of position" and "war of movement" is broken, with the consequence that the second is reduced to a form devoid of real expansive, illusory or adventurous character. The paradigm of revolution is conceived by these tendencies as a guiding theory for the growth of a front of increasingly radical movements of struggle, mystically endowed with the property of determining, in the course of the struggle, the conditions of their own further development. The party is thus seen as a synthesis and as an instrument and organisational direction for these movements. The form of the revolution is therefore

⁹ In this regard, the various notes of Critique to the text "*The ABC of Communism*" by the revisionist Bukharin are also important. In *the Prison Notebooks* this text is referred to as a "popular essay".

regarded as an expression of the growth of a gradualist type of insurrectionary movement.

This type of paradigm of revolution, which denies or deforms Marxism, Leninism and Maoism, is in fact extremely obsolete in substance and corresponds, even if only in broad outline, to those dynamics of the typically nineteenth-century class conflict, of which a first significant assessment was made by Engels in the Introduction to Marx's text on *The Class Struggles in France*.

The extreme theoretical and political relevance of this question can be deduced from the enduring nostalgia in Italy for the movements and forms of class confrontation of the Sixties and Seventies and from the hegemony of reformist or revolutionary trade-unionism and movimentism in the radical left and in the extreme left of our country.

8. ON THE HISTORY OF THE CLASS STRUGGLE IN ITALY

For Gramsci, this means going back as far as the decline of the Roman Empire. The specific form taken by this decadence is said to have laid the foundations so that in 'Italy', unlike the main European countries, the phase of absolutist feudalism could not develop.

This line of interpretation also explains the relatively fast involution of the Communes (late 1200) and the partially regressive character of figures such as Dante Alighieri (1265-1321), ultimately unable to contribute to the creation of the

ideological prerequisites for the formation of a bourgeois class.

Similarly, Humanism and the Renaissance (late 14th century and 15th century) in 'Italy' only sanctioned the separation between intellectuals, increasingly transformed into a privileged caste, and the popular masses. The question of language is seen by Gramsci as being closely linked to these processes.¹⁰

All this converges in the explanation of why in Italy the Jacobin revolutionary movements were completely marginal, while vice versa, with the centrality assumed by the Piedmontese state in the unification process, a sort of liberal autocracy emerged and asserted itself with much more reactionary characteristics than those of the nineteenth-century liberal states of the main European countries.

This explains why the role of the papacy remained an Italian anomaly, which was never really questioned even after the formation of the unitary state. In this way, Gramsci also outlines a continuity between the question of language, the question of the formation of the caste of intellectuals and the failure to develop a Jacobin-type bourgeoisie.

The consequence is that there was in Italy a significant continuity between the unitary Risorgimento state and the

¹⁰ It is sufficient here to recall that at the time of the formation of the Italian state (1861) only a clear minority of the population actually spoke Italian. The same entrepreneurs and bankers of the time, who were generally also influential politicians (think of Cavour), often had little knowledge of Italian and preferred to speak French instead.

form of state established in the successive historical and political phases.

In fact, there was continuity between a reactionary liberal bourgeoisie expressing the interests of the commercial banks and the capitalist and semi-feudal landowners and the dominant bloc rapidly moving towards fascism with the end of World War I. A bloc then characterized by the significant presence of semi-feudal rents and a bourgeois form expression of marginal imperialism and monopolistic capitalism, developed by state initiative and dependent on the large French, English and German banks.

It could be argued that the bureaucratic and caste characteristics of the liberal Risorgimento bourgeoisie and the intellectuals connected with it merged with the presence and role of the Vatican. The consequence was the emergence of specific bureaucratic characteristics, which still persist, of the bourgeois State and of Italian imperialism.

This vision relating to the conjugation between economic relations, intellectual bureaucratic caste and hegemonic, administrative and repressive apparatuses, appears in Gramsci as an articulation and a specification of the category of "passive revolution" with respect to Italian history.

As with most of the basic themes of the *Prison Notebooks*, Gramsci treats the question of the Italian Risorgimento simultaneously on different levels. There are arguably two main ones: i. the Risorgimento as a decisive step in the formation of a certain type of Italian state and a certain liberal bourgeoisie characterised in a bureaucratic and reactionary sense; ii. the Risorgimento as a paradigm of a 'passive

revolution' that offers important and essentially enduring lessons for the proletarian revolution in Italy.

In this context, Gramsci considers the Risorgimento left as a kind of matrix of that intellectual class that would later become hegemonic in the formation of the socialist party. The Risorgimento left was the left wing of liberalism, bearer of an aristocratic and bureaucratic vision, typical intellectual caste that despised the peasant masses.

Gramsci reconstructs the formation of the intellectual tendencies of the far left Risorgimento also with the aim of highlighting the ideological limits of the socialist party, which never became a real proletarian party and never really worked to build a workers'-peasant block. During the 1920s and 1930s, this party became an organically reactionary social democratic party.

We can therefore read Gramsci's immense work in the Prison Notebooks also as an attempt to build a leadership group capable of emancipating itself from the influence of the previous forms of the intellectual caste of liberals, the Risorgimento left and the workers' and socialist movement, which were subsequently perpetuated even within the Communist Party of Italy itself through reformism, revisionism, syndicalism, Bordighism, Trotskyism and maximalism.

9. ON THE CENTRALITY OF IDEOLOGY AND PHILOSOPHY OF DIALECTICAL MATERIALISM

The great importance Gramsci gave to the question of the critique of positivist and sociological materialism is indicative of the central role he attributed to the philosophical and ideological struggle to correct the intellectual formation of cadres and leaders from the Italian socialist party. This type of training tended to be reproduced within the Communist Party of Italy itself, which was formed in 1921, and which not by chance was directed in its early years by the then majority fraction of Bordighism, underground allied with Trotskyism. For Gramsci it was a question of striking and deconstructing the type of subjectivity and the philosophical and ideological foundations that accompanied positions, strategies and political lines that restricted the revolutionary political tasks related to the struggle for hegemony in an economicist and passivising way. This was in function of the affirmation of a revolutionary popular government of workers and peasants.

This profound unity which Gramsci grasped between intellectual training and political practice also referred, on a philosophical and ideological level, to the need for a 'permanent intellectual and moral reform'¹¹ Aof those political forces that referred to the need for proletarian revolution. In particular, this need was decisive for the cadres, militants and sympathisers of the Communist Party of Italy.

¹¹ Gramsci intended by this term to refer to the ideological struggle.

One cannot fail to see, on the one hand, the extreme timeliness of such a task and the tendential correspondence with the typically Maoist themes of the importance of the ideological struggle and that for the hegemony and the centrality of the cultural revolution as the initial phase of the revolutionary war.

There is therefore a certain harmony between Gramsci and Maoism with regard to the question of the need for a permanent ideological struggle aimed at transformation, in the first place, of the bourgeois philosophical and ideological conceptions and nuclei which always remain in the revolutionary cadres and in the most active and advanced sectors of the masses, under the surface layers of class consciousness, then emerge with a deeply regressive role in situations of crisis and difficulties and in those in which the fight between the black line and the red line develops.

10. THE LESSONS OF GRAMSCI'S STRUGGLE AGAINST NEOIDEALIST IRRATIONALISM

In the last decades of the nineteenth century positivism, as one of the forms of the "return to Kant" in controversy with historical materialism and Hegelian dialectic idealism, had represented the philosophical basis of a new type approach empiricist and scientist to historical and social sciences.

This context, in which sociology was born as a complex of reactionary conceptions and theories, counter to Marxism. These were irrational conceptions often cloaked in a materialistic pretense.

Starting from the early years of the twentieth century, in apparent opposition to positivism but openly alongside phenomenology, also of Kantian derivation, In Italy, too, a reactionary tendency had developed on the ideological and philosophical field, represented by the currents of subjective idealism that masked themselves behind the banner of the revival of Hegel's thought.

In Italy this tendency was represented by the neo-idealism of Benedetto Croce and Gentile. Hegel's revival supported by neo-idealism, similar to that advocated in Germany and other countries by similar ideological currents, subsequently converged accordingly into fascism and ultra-reactionary liberalism.

The common root of this revival is the so-called 'reform of the Hegelian dialectic', i.e. the replacement of Hegelian objective idealism with a petty, sophistic subjective idealism. The core of this operation consisted in the negation of dialectics, of the theory of knowledge and of the theory of contradiction, and in the relative affirmation of the theory of the synthesis between thesis (reactionary) and antithesis (revolutionary), as the guiding conception for the struggle against antithesis, in order to deconstruct and fully defeat it. It was, in short, the theorisation, on a philosophical level, of the 'passive revolution' as a theory and strategy to overcome the tendency towards proletarian revolution.

The whole was notoriously matched in the attempt of fascism and nazism to present itself as a nationalist and conservative force on the one hand, but on the other "revolutionary" and even "socialist". In this context the distinction between the ultra-reactionary liberalism of Croce and the fascist actualism of Gentile was quite secondary to their common counter-revolutionary soul.

All this is particularly significant if we consider how, after the World War II, Crocian liberalism continued to play a leading role in intellectual and academic circles, often meeting with the modern revisionism of Togliatti's PCI.

Gramsci's struggle for dialectics, against the pseudo-materialist conception dominant in the PSI, against the ultra-reactionary irrationalism represented by neo-idealism and against the liberal and revisionist intellectual bloc that theorized the need for the "passive revolution", is an important lesson and ideological legacy for the formation of a new generation of Maoist militants.

11. THE ROLE OF CULTURAL POLICY AND ART IN THE PROLETARIAT'S WAR OF POSITION

Gramsci's theory of the unification of 'war of position' and 'war of movement' refers to the need to develop, combine and finalise all levels of the class struggle in a conscious and properly planned manner. Among them, a fundamental role is played by the work on the philosophical and ideological level for the formation and ideological, cultural and moral transformation not only of the cadres and militants, but also of the advanced sectors of the masses and, in perspective, of the entire proletariat and all the popular strata.

According to Gramsci, it is necessary to consider revolutionary theory, ideology and proletarian morality fused with class passion and hatred, as the heart of the effectively revolutionary political initiative of communist militants and the most advanced sectors of the masses.

Gramsci's forceful call for a "permanent intellectual and moral reform" also contains the problem of the struggle for art as one of the articulations of a new overall culture, linked to a new conception of life and a new feeling and perceiving reality.

A culture and an art that reflects the struggle for the establishment and affirmation of a new proletarian civil and political society, which therefore in artistic representation

does not idealistically separate the form of expression from the revolutionary content. This is a very different unity from the current conception of "art for art's sake", with the relative identification of form and content where "the content of art is [only] art itself, an [empty and abstractly] philosophical category (Gramsci)".

12. THE PROJECT: A PROPOSAL FOR TRAINING, SELF-TRAINING AND DELIMITATION

We therefore propose a work of critical resumption of Gramsci's contributions in the framework of a process of self-formation, training and delimitation on the *Prison Notebooks*.

We refer to self-training because we believe that this process should be carried out at the service of proletarians, students and militants who do not know Gramsci's thought and who would like to and should know it.

We refer to training because we think that it is above all in the course of a collective process that qualitative advances and transformations of points of view can be achieved, which can eventually sediment a higher level of sharing.

We speak of delimitation because we want to avoid not only culturalism but also eclecticism, in the framework of a work that we want to conceive, among others, at the service of the construction of a new proletarian subjectivity.

The initial phase of this process can, in our opinion, consist of the collective discussion of texts on Gramsci that we will propose from time to time, and of collections of quotations from the *Prison Notebooks*, suitably framed and commented upon. The questions that will be focused on are related to Gramsci's contributions to the following issues: 1) history and formation of capitalism and the Italian state, 2) content and form of the paradigm of the proletarian revolution, 3) theory of "passive revolutions", 4) the difference between the theory of the war of reactionary position and the theory of the war of position of the proletariat, 5) the question of the unification, in the field of the proletariat, of the theory of the "war of position" and of the theory of the "war of movement", 6) the struggle against the movementist and economicist paradigm of revolution proposed by workerist counselling, Trotskyism, Bordighism and revolutionary syndicalism, 7) the link between liberal, reformist, economicist and movementist conceptions and vulgar sociological and mechanistic materialism, 8) the centrality of the philosophy of historical materialism and materialist dialectics for the formation and ideological transformation, 8) the centrality of the philosophy of historical materialism and materialist dialectics in the ideological, intellectual and moral formation and transformation of communist militants and advanced sectors of the popular masses; 9) the struggle against ethical and culturalist "Marxism" of liberal matrix and irrationalist and idealist character; 10) cultural politics as a relevant dimension of the proletariat's war of position.

We think that this project can and must gradually provide for diversified and complementary forms and contexts, from seminars to online debates, to the discussion groups on the *Prison Notebooks*, to moments of confrontation with comrades and Maoist militants from other countries of the world.

A work in which the proletarian and the student can be just as active and protagonists as the teacher or the professional intellectual. A work that we believe should have an adequate public impact in the future, aimed at contributing to the development of the class consciousness of the advanced elements of the proletariat, of the students and of the popular masses, and which may possibly be accompanied by the formation of contexts, circles and discussion groups on the materials produced, by propaganda and by appropriate moments of celebration.

We will contribute as much as we can to give life to this project. It is obvious that the more the project can be shared and implemented collectively, the more it can be, quantitatively and qualitatively, significant at the public level and thus contribute to the necessary movement of revolutionary renewal required today by the current crystallised and bureaucratised forms of political subjectivity of a large part of the Italian extreme left.

NEW HEGEMONY BLOG

