

STATE AND CIVIL SOCIETY

INTRODUCTION

The notes grouped in this section include some of the most crucial to an understanding of Gramsci's political thought. They deal with the nature of fascism, the revolutionary strategy appropriate in the West (or in the epoch in which Gramsci is writing—see below), and the theory of the State. They can perhaps best be approached via the three related concepts of Caesarism, war of position, and civil society.

"Caesarism", for Gramsci, is a concept which does not merely refer to fascism, but can have a wider application—e.g. to the British National Government of 1931, etc.; it is thus not identical to Marx's concept of "Bonapartism", although it is clearly related to it. "Caesarism" represents a compromise between two "fundamental" social forces, but 1. "The problem is to see whether in the dialectic 'revolution/restoration' it is revolution or restoration which predominates", and 2. "It would be an error of method to believe that in Caesarism . . . the entire new historical phenomenon is due to the equilibrium of the 'fundamental' forces. It is also necessary to see the interplay of relations between the principal groups . . . of the fundamental classes and the auxiliary forces directed by, or subjected to, their hegemonic influence." Thus, in the specific case of the fascist régime in Italy, the problem, in Gramsci's eyes, is 1. to analyse the "passive revolution" which fascism perhaps represents, and 2. to analyse the specificity of the social forces which produced it—i.e. rejecting absolutely the crude equation fascism = capitalism.

In "The Concept of 'Passive Revolution'" (pp. 106-14), Gramsci tentatively related "passive revolution" to "war of position". The difficulty of this latter concept is that Gramsci uses it in two partially conflicting senses. Sometimes it is the form of political struggle which alone is possible in periods of relatively stable equilibrium between the fundamental classes, i.e. when frontal attack, or war of manoeuvre, is impossible. It is in such periods that Gramsci poses the question "does there exist an absolute identity between war of position and passive revolution? Or at least does there exist, or can there be conceived, an entire historical period in which the two concepts must be considered identical—until the point at which

the war of position again becomes a war of manoeuvre?" Here, clearly, war of position will give way to war of manoeuvre at a certain point in the historical development, and then it will once again be possible to carry out "frontal attacks" on the State. However, in "Political Struggle and Military War" (pp. 229-38), war of position is related to the West, where there is a "proper relation between State and civil society", unlike the East (Russia), where war of manoeuvre was appropriate. The two conceptions of "war of position" are only reconciled in one passage, and that with considerable qualifications, where Gramsci suggests that in the West civil society resists, i.e. must be conquered, before the frontal assault on the State. This notion can of course be related to the thesis put forward in "The Problem of Political Leadership . . ." above, where Gramsci says that "A social group can, and indeed must, already exercise 'leadership' [i.e. be hegemonic] before winning governmental power (this indeed is one of the principal conditions for the winning of such power)".

Clearly this thesis is open to reformist interpretations, involving an under-estimate of the problem of the State in revolutionary strategy. But there is little justification for imputing any such illusion to Gramsci himself. The fact that, more than any other great revolutionary Marxist thinker, he concerned himself with the sphere of "civil society" and of "hegemony", in his prison writings, cannot be taken to indicate a neglect of the moment of political society, of force, of domination. On the contrary, his entire record shows that this was not the case, and that his constant preoccupation was to avoid any undialectical separation of "the ethical-political aspect of politics or theory of hegemony and consent" from "the aspect of force and economics". What is, however, true is that Gramsci did not succeed in finding a single, wholly satisfactory conception of "civil society" or the State. This is not the place to attempt a discussion of his theory of the State. (Those interested should see, in particular, the important exchange between Norberto Bobbio and Jacques Texier in *Gramsci e la cultura contemporanea*, Editori Riuniti, 1969.) But the diversity of his attempts to formulate his position must be briefly indicated.

In the passage referred to above, civil society resists *before* the frontal assault on the State. Yet, in another of the notes grouped under the title "Political Struggle and Military War", Gramsci describes the State in the West as "an outer ditch, behind which there stand a powerful system of fortresses and earthworks"—i.e. in precisely the opposite way. The State is elsewhere defined as

“political society + civil society”, and elsewhere again as a balance between political society and civil society. In yet another passage, Gramsci stresses that “in concrete reality, civil society and State are one and the same”.

To these variations in Gramsci's conception of the State there correspond analogous variations in his conception of civil society. (See too notes 4, 5 and 49 on pp. 55, 55 and 80 respectively, and note 71 on p. 170.) On PP, p. 164, Gramsci writes: “A distinction must be made between civil society as understood by Hegel, and as often used in these notes (i.e. in the sense of political and cultural hegemony of a social group over the entire society, as ethical content of the State), and on the other hand civil society in the sense in which it is understood by Catholics, for whom civil society is instead political society of the State, in contrast with the society of family and that of the Church.” In this “Hegelian” usage, State/political society is contrasted to civil society as moments of the superstructure. Yet in Hegel's *Philosophy of Right*, civil society includes economic relations—and it is in this sense that the term is used by Marx, for example in *The Jewish Question*. And Gramsci too at times adopts this usage, e.g. on MS, pp. 266–67: “Every social form has its *homo oeconomicus*, i.e. its own economic activity. To maintain that the concept of *homo oeconomicus* has no scientific value is merely a way of maintaining that the economic structure and the economic activity appropriate to it are radically changed, in other words that the economic structure is so changed that the mode of economic behaviour must necessarily change too in order to become appropriate to the new structure. But precisely here lies the disagreement, and a disagreement which is not so much objective and scientific as political. What, anyway, would a scientific recognition that the economic structure has changed, and that economic behaviour must change to conform to the new structure, mean? It would have the significance of a political stimulus, nothing more. Between the economic structure and the State with its legislation and its coercion stands civil society, and the latter must be radically transformed, in a concrete sense and not simply on the statute-book or in scientific books. The State is the instrument for conforming civil society to the economic structure, but it is necessary for the State to ‘be willing’ to do this; i.e. for the representatives of the change that has taken place in the economic structure to be in control of the State. To expect that civil society will conform to the new structure as a result of propaganda and persuasion, or that the old *homo oeconomicus* will disappear without being buried with all

the honours it deserves, is a new form of economic rhetoric, a new form of empty and inconclusive economic moralism.” Here civil society is in effect equated with “the mode of economic behaviour”.

## OBSERVATIONS ON CERTAIN ASPECTS OF THE STRUCTURE OF POLITICAL PARTIES IN PERIODS OF ORGANIC CRISIS

At a certain point in their historical lives, social classes become detached from their traditional parties. In other words, the traditional parties in that particular organisational form, with the particular men who constitute, represent, and lead them, are no longer recognised by their class (or fraction of a class) as its expression. When such crises occur, the immediate situation becomes delicate and dangerous, because the field is open for violent solutions, for the activities of unknown forces, represented by charismatic "men of destiny".

These situations of conflict between "represented and representatives" reverberate out from the terrain of the parties (the party organisations properly speaking, the parliamentary-electoral field, newspaper organisation) throughout the State organism, reinforcing the relative power of the bureaucracy (civil and military), of high finance, of the Church, and generally of all bodies relatively independent of the fluctuations of public opinion. How are they created in the first place? In every country the process is different, although the content is the same. And the content is the crisis of the ruling class's hegemony, which occurs either because the ruling class has failed in some major political undertaking for which it has requested, or forcibly extracted, the consent of the broad masses (war, for example), or because huge masses (especially of peasants and petit-bourgeois intellectuals) have passed suddenly from a state of political passivity to a certain activity, and put forward demands which taken together, albeit not organically formulated, add up to a revolution. A "crisis of authority"<sup>1</sup> is spoken of: this is precisely the crisis of hegemony, or general crisis of the State.

The crisis creates situations which are dangerous in the short run, since the various strata of the population are not all capable of orienting themselves equally swiftly, or of reorganizing with the same rhythm. The traditional ruling class, which has numerous trained cadres, changes men and programmes and, with greater speed than is achieved by the subordinate classes, reabsorbs the control that was slipping from its grasp. Perhaps it may make sacrifices, and expose itself to an uncertain future by demagogic promises; but it retains power, reinforces it for the time being, and

uses it to crush its adversary and disperse his leading cadres, who cannot be very numerous or highly trained. The passage of the troops of many different parties under the banner of a single party, which better represents and resumes the needs of the entire class, is an organic and normal phenomenon, even if its rhythm is very swift—indeed almost like lightning in comparison with periods of calm. It represents the fusion of an entire social class under a single leadership, which alone is held to be capable of solving an overriding problem of its existence and of fending off a mortal danger. When the crisis does not find this organic solution, but that of the charismatic leader, it means that a static equilibrium exists (whose factors may be disparate, but in which the decisive one is the immaturity of the progressive forces); it means that no group, neither the conservatives nor the progressives, has the strength for victory, and that even the conservative group needs a master. [1932-1934: 1st version 1930-1932.] See *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte*. This order of phenomena is connected to one of the most important questions concerning the political party—i.e. the party's capacity to react against force of habit, against the tendency to become mummified and anachronistic. Parties come into existence, and constitute themselves as organisations, in order to influence the situation at moments which are historically vital for their class; but they are not always capable of adapting themselves to new tasks and to new epochs, nor of evolving *pari passu* with the overall relations of force (and hence the relative position of their class) in the country in question, or in the international field. In analysing the development of parties, it is necessary to distinguish: their social group; their mass membership; their bureaucracy and General Staff. The bureaucracy is the most dangerously hidebound and conservative force; if it ends up by constituting a compact body, which stands on its own and feels itself independent of the mass of members, the party ends up by becoming anachronist and at moments of acute crisis it is voided of its social content and left as though suspended in mid-air. One can see what has happened to a number of German parties as a result of the expansion of Hitlerism. French parties are a rich field for such research: they are all mummified and anachronistic—historico-political documents of the various phases of past French history, whose outdated terminology they continue to repeat; their crisis could become even more catastrophic than that of the German parties. [1932-34: 1st version 1930-32.]

In examining such phenomena people usually neglect to give due

<sup>1</sup> See "'Wave of Materialism' and 'Crisis of Authority'", on pp. 275-6.

importance to the bureaucratic element, both civil and military; furthermore they forget that not only actual military and bureaucratic elements, but also the social strata from which, in the particular national structure, the bureaucracy is traditionally recruited, must be included in such analyses. A political movement can be of a military character even if the army as such does not participate in it openly; a government can be of a military character even if the army as such does not take part in it. In certain situations it may happen that it suits better not to "reveal" the army, not to have it cross the bounds of what is constitutional, not to introduce politics into the ranks, as the saying goes—so that the homogeneity between officers and other ranks is maintained, on a terrain of apparent neutrality and superiority to the factions; yet it is nonetheless the army, that is to say the General Staff and the officer corps, which determines the new situation and dominates it. However, it is not true that armies are constitutionally barred from making politics; the army's duty is precisely to defend the Constitution—in other words the legal form of the State together with its related institutions. Hence so-called neutrality only means support for the reactionary side; but in such situations, the question has to be posed in such terms to prevent the unrest in the country being reproduced within the army, and the determining power of the General Staff thus evaporating through the disintegration of its military instrument. Obviously, none of these observations is absolute; at various moments of history and in various countries they have widely differing significance.

The first problem to be studied is the following: does there exist, in a given country, a widespread social stratum in whose economic life and political self-assertion (effective participation in power, even though indirectly, by "blackmail") the bureaucratic career, either civil or military, is a very important element? In modern Europe this stratum can be identified in the medium and small rural bourgeoisie, which is more or less numerous from one country to another—depending on the development of industrial strength on the one hand, and of agrarian reform on the other. Of course the bureaucratic career (civil and military) is not the monopoly of this social stratum; however, it is particularly well suited to the social function which this stratum carries out, and to the psychological tendencies which such a function produces or encourages. These two elements impart to the entire social stratum a certain homogeneity and energy in its aims—and hence a political value, and an often decisive function within the entire social

organism. The members of this stratum are accustomed to direct command over nuclei of men, however tiny, and to commanding "politically", not "economically". In other words, their art of command implies no aptitude for ordering "things", for ordering "men and things" into an organic whole, as occurs in industrial production—since this stratum has no economic functions in the modern sense of the word. It has an income, because legally it is the owner of a part of the national soil, and its function consists in opposing "politically" the attempts of the peasant farmer to ameliorate his existence—since any improvement in the relative position of the peasant would be catastrophic for its social position. The chronic poverty and prolonged labour of the peasant, with the degradation these bring, are a primordial necessity for it. This is the explanation for the immense energy it shows in resisting and counterattacking whenever there is the least attempt at autonomous organisation of peasant labour, or any peasant cultural movement which leaves the bounds of official religion. This social stratum finds its limits, and the reasons for its ultimate weakness, in its territorial dispersal and in the "non-homogeneity" which is intimately connected to this dispersal. This explains some of its other characteristics too: its volubility, the multiplicity of ideological systems it follows, even the bizarre nature of the ideologies it sometimes follows. Its will is directed towards a specific end—but it is retarded, and usually requires a lengthy process before it can become politically and organisationally centralised. This process accelerates when the specific "will" of this stratum coincides with the will and the immediate interests of the ruling class; not only that, but its "military strength" then at once reveals itself, so that sometimes, when organised, it lays down the law to the ruling class, at least as far as the "form" of solution is concerned, if not the content. The same laws can be seen functioning here as have been observed in relations between town and countryside in the case of the subordinate classes.<sup>3</sup> Power in the towns automatically becomes power in the countryside. But the absence of economic margins and the normally heavier repression exercised from the top downwards in the countryside cause conflicts there immediately to assume an acute and "personal" form, so that counterattacks have to be more rapid and determined. The stratum under consideration understands and sees that the origin of its troubles is in the towns, in urban power; it therefore understands that it "must" dictate a

<sup>3</sup> See "The City-Countryside Relationship" on pp. 90-102 above.

solution to the urban ruling classes, so that the principal hot-bed will be extinguished—even if this does not immediately suit the urban ruling classes themselves, either because it is too costly, or because it is dangerous in the long term (these classes see longer cycles of development, in which it is possible to manoeuvre, instead of simply following “material” interests). It is in that sense, rather than in an absolute one, that the function of this stratum should be seen as directive;<sup>3</sup> all the same, it is no light matter.\* It must be noted how this “military” character of the social group in question—traditionally a spontaneous reaction to certain specific conditions of its existence—is now consciously cultivated and organically formed in anticipation. To this conscious process belong the systematic efforts to create and reinforce various associations of reservists and ex-combatants from the various corps and branches of the services, especially of officers. These associations are linked to the respective General Staffs, and can be mobilised when required, without the need to mobilise the conscript army. The latter can thus preserve its character of a reserve force—forewarned, reinforced, and immunised from the political gangrene by these “private” forces which cannot fail to influence its morale, sustaining and stiffening it. It could be said that the result is a movement of the “cossack” type—with its formations ranged not along the frontiers of nationality, as was the case with the Tsarist cossacks, but along the “frontiers” of the social class.

In a whole series of countries, therefore, military influence in national life means not only the influence and weight of the military in the technical sense, but the influence and weight of the social

\* See note 5 on p. 55. Gramsci's argument here is that the North Italian capitalists might have preferred to continue with Giolitti's strategy of alliance with the reformist working-class leaders after 1920, but that they were “led” by their landlord allies to switch to a policy of total repression of the organized working class. (It is true that “agrarian fascism” did precede urban repression.) “Absolute” hegemony within the ruling-class bloc, however, remained of course with the urban bourgeoisie.

\* A reflection of this stratum can be seen in the ideological activity of the conservative intellectuals of the Right. Gaetano Mosca's book *Teorica dei governi e governo parlamentare* (second edition 1925, first edition 1883) is typical in this respect;<sup>4</sup> even in 1883 Mosca was terrified at the possibility of a contact between the towns and the countryside. Mosca, because of his defensive position (of counterattack), understood the political technique of the subaltern classes better in 1883 than the representatives of those same classes, even in the towns, understood it themselves even several decades later.

<sup>4</sup> Mosca (1858–1941) was together with Pareto and Michels an originator of the sociological theory of “*élites*”. His basic concept was that of the “political class”, and his main object of attack was the Marxist theory of class struggle and concept of “ruling class”. (See NM, p. 140, etc.)

stratum from which the latter (especially the junior officers) mostly derives its origin. This series of observations is indispensable for any really profound analysis of the specific political form usually termed Caesarism or Bonapartism—to distinguish it from other forms in which the technical military element as such predominates, in conformations perhaps still more visible and exclusive.

Spain and Greece offer two typical examples, with both similar and dissimilar characteristics. In Spain it is necessary to take certain peculiarities into account: the size of the national territory, and the low density of the peasant population. Between the latifundist aristocrat and the peasant there does not exist a numerous rural bourgeoisie; hence, minor importance of the junior officer corps as a force in itself. (On the other hand, a certain oppositional importance was possessed by the officers of the technical corps—artillery and engineers; these, of urban bourgeois origin, opposed the generals and attempted to have a policy of their own.) Hence military governments in Spain are governments of “great” generals. Passivity of the peasant masses, as citizens and as soldiers. If political disintegration occurs in the army, it does so in a vertical rather than a horizontal sense, through rivalries between cliques at the top: the rank and file splits up behind the various competing leaders. Military government is a parenthesis between two constitutional governments. The military are the permanent reserves of order and conservation; they are a political force which comes into action “publicly” when “legality” is in danger. The course of events is similar in Greece, with the difference that Greek territory is scattered over a whole system of islands, and that a part of its more energetic and active population is always at sea, which makes military intrigue and conspiracy easier. The peasantry is passive in Greece as in Spain; but in the context of the total population—the most energetic and active Greeks being sailors, and almost always far from the centre of their political life—the general passivity must be analysed differently in each case, nor can the solution to the problem be the same in both countries. When the members of a deposed government were shot in Greece some years ago,<sup>5</sup> this was probably to be explained as an outburst of rage on

<sup>5</sup> In 1920, Greece was torn between two ruling class factions. On the one hand the supporters of the deposed King Constantine, who leaned towards Germany. On the other the “liberals” headed by Venizelos, supported by the British. After several alternations in power, an attempt was made to assassinate Venizelos—who was Prime Minister at the time—in August 1920, and its failure was followed by savage reprisals. Among those massacred was the royalist ex-minister Dragoumis.

the part of the energetic and active element referred to above, with the intention of imparting a bloody lesson. The most important observation to be made is that neither in Greece nor in Spain has the experience of military government created a permanent, and formally organic, political and social ideology—as does on the other hand occur in those countries which are, so to speak, potentially Bonapartist. The general historical conditions of the two types are the same: an equilibrium of the conflicting urban classes, which obstructs the mechanism of “normal” democracy—i.e. parliamentarism. But the influence of the countryside in this equilibrium is diverse in the two cases. In countries like Spain, the total passivity of the countryside enables the generals of the landowning aristocracy to utilise the army politically to restabilise the threatened equilibrium—in other words the supremacy of the ruling classes. In other countries the countryside is not passive, but the peasant movement is not coordinated politically with the urban movement: here the army has to remain neutral (up to a certain point, of course), since otherwise it might split horizontally; instead the bureaucratic military class comes into action. This class, by military means, stifles the (more immediately dangerous) movement in the countryside. In this struggle, it finds a certain political and ideological unification; it finds allies in the urban middle classes (middle in the Italian sense)<sup>6</sup>—reinforced by students of rural origin now living in the towns; and it imposes its political methods on the upper classes, which are compelled to make numerous concessions to it, and to allow some legislation favourable

<sup>6</sup> On NM, pp. 148–49, Gramsci writes: “The meaning of the expression ‘middle class’ changes from country to country. . . . The term came from English social development. It seems that in England the bourgeoisie was never conceived of as an integral part of the people, but always as an entity separate from the latter: it thus came to pass, in English history, that instead of the bourgeoisie leading the people and winning the latter’s support to abolish feudal privileges, the nobility (or a fraction of it) formed the national-popular bloc first against the Crown and later against the industrial bourgeoisie. English tradition of a popular “Toryism” (Disraeli, etc.). After the great liberal reforms, which brought the State into conformity with the interests and needs of the middle class, the two basic parties of English political life were differentiated on internal questions regarding the same class; the nobility increasingly acquired the specific character of a “bourgeois aristocracy” tied to certain functions of civil society and of political society (the State)—concerning tradition, the education of the ruling stratum, the preservation of a particular mentality which protects the system from sudden upheavals, etc., the consolidation of the imperial structure, etc. . . . In Italy, where the feudal aristocracy was destroyed by the mediaeval Communes (physically destroyed in the civil wars, except in Southern Italy and Sicily), since the traditional ‘high’ class is missing, the term ‘middle’ has gone down a rung. ‘Negatively,’ middle class means non-popular, i.e. those not workers or peasants; positively, it means the intellectual strata, the professional strata, the public employees.”

to its interests. In short, continuing to maintain itself under arms amidst the general disarmament, and brandishing the danger of a civil war between its own troops and the regular, conscripted army if the ruling class shows too great an itch for resistance, it succeeds in permeating the State with its interests, up to a certain point, and in replacing a part of the leading personnel. These observations must not be conceived of as rigid schemata, but merely as practical criteria of historical and political interpretation. In concrete analyses of real events, the historical forms are individualised and can almost be called “unique”. Caesar represents a very different combination of real circumstances from that represented by Napoleon I, as does Primo de Rivera from that of Živkovič, etc.<sup>7</sup> [1933–34: 1st version 1930–32]

In analysing the third level or moment of the system of relations of force which exists in a given situation,<sup>8</sup> one may usefully have recourse to the concept which in military science is called the “strategic conjuncture”—or rather, more precisely, the level of strategic preparation of the theatre of struggle. One of the principal factors of this “strategic conjuncture” consists in the qualitative condition of the leading personnel, and of what may be called the “front-line” (and assault) forces. The level of strategic preparation can give the victory to forces which are “apparently” (i.e. quantitatively) inferior to those of the enemy. It could be said that strategic preparation tends to reduce to zero the so-called “imponderable factors”—in other words, the immediate, unpremeditated reactions at a given moment of the traditionally inert and passive forces. Among the factors involved in the preparation of a favourable strategic conjuncture, there must precisely be included those already studied in our earlier observations on the existence and organisation of a military social stratum, side by side with the national army in the technical sense.\*

<sup>7</sup> Primo de Rivera (1870–1930) was dictator of Spain 1923–30, with the support of the monarchy. Petar Živkovič (1879–1947) was Yugoslav prime minister 1929–32, and the instrument of King Alexander’s dictatorial rule during those years.

<sup>8</sup> See “Analysis of Situations” above, pp. 175–185.

\* In connection with the “military stratum”, what T. Tittoni writes in *Ricordi personali di politica interna* (Nuova Antologia, 1–16 April 1929) is interesting. Tittoni recounts how he meditated on the fact that, in order to assemble the forces of order required to confront disturbances which had broken out in one place, it was necessary to plunder other regions. During the Red Week of June 1914, in order to repress the troubles in Ancona, Ravenna was plundered in this way; and subsequently the Prefect of Ravenna, deprived of his forces of order, was obliged to shut himself up in the Prefecture, abandoning the city to the rebels. “Several times I wondered what the government could have done if a

Further points could be developed out of the following extract from the speech which General Gazzera, Minister of War, delivered in the Senate on 19 May 1932 (see *Corriere della Sera*, 20 May): "The disciplinary régime obtaining in our army thanks to Fascism, today sets a guiding norm valid for the entire nation. Other armies have had, and still retain, a formal and rigid discipline. We keep the principle constantly before us that the army is made for war, and that it is for war that it must prepare; peacetime discipline must be the same as wartime discipline, and it is in peacetime that the latter must find its spiritual foundations. Our discipline is based on a spirit of cohesion between leaders and followers which is a spontaneous product of the system adopted. This system resisted magnificently throughout a long and very hard war until the final victory; it is the merit of the Fascist régime to have extended to the entire Italian people so distinguished a disciplinary tradition. It is on individual discipline that the outcome of strategic conceptions and of tactical operations depends. War has taught us many things, among them that there is a deep gulf between peacetime preparation and wartime reality. It is certain that, whatever preparations may have been made, the initial operations of a campaign place the belligerents before new problems, which produce surprises on both sides. It should not for that reason be concluded that it is useless to have any *a priori* conceptions, and that no lessons can be derived from past wars. A theory of war can in fact be extracted from them, a theory which must be understood through intellectual discipline—understood as a means for promoting modes of reasoning which are not discordant, and uniformity of language such as will enable all to understand and make themselves understood. If, on occasions, theoretical unity has threatened to degenerate into schematism, there has at once been a prompt reaction, enforcing a rapid renovation of tactics—also made necessary by technical advances. Such a system of rules is therefore not static and traditional, as some people think. Tradition is considered only as a force, and the rules are constantly in the process of revision—not simply for the sake of change, but in order to fit them to reality." (An example of "preparation of the strategic conjuncture" is to be found in Churchill's *Memoirs*, where he speaks of the battle of Jutland.) [1933-34: 1st version 1932]

movement of revolt had broken out simultaneously all over the peninsula." Tittoni proposed to the government that it should enrol ex-combatants under the command of retired officers as "public order volunteers". His project seemed to merit consideration, but it was not followed up.

CAESARISM<sup>9</sup>

Caesar, Napoleon I, Napoleon III, Cromwell, etc. Compile a catalogue of the historical events which have culminated in a great "heroic" personality.

Caesarism can be said to express a situation in which the forces in conflict balance each other in a catastrophic manner; that is to say, they balance each other in such a way that a continuation of the conflict can only terminate in their reciprocal destruction. When the progressive force A struggles with the reactionary force B, not only may A defeat B or B defeat A, but it may happen that neither A nor B defeats the other—that they bleed each other mutually and then a third force C intervenes from outside, subjugating what is left of both A and B. In Italy, after the death of Lorenzo il Magnifico, this is precisely what occurred.<sup>10</sup>

But Caesarism—although it always expresses the particular solution in which a great personality is entrusted with the task of "arbitration" over a historico-political situation characterised by an equilibrium of forces heading towards catastrophe—does not in all cases have the same historical significance. There can be both progressive and reactionary forms of Caesarism; the exact significance of each form can, in the last analysis, be reconstructed only through concrete history, and not by means of any sociological rule of thumb. Caesarism is progressive when its intervention helps the progressive force to triumph, albeit with its victory tempered by certain compromises and limitations. It is reactionary when its intervention helps the reactionary force to triumph—in this case too with certain compromises and limitations, which have, however, a different value, extent, and significance than in the former. Caesar and Napoleon I are examples of progressive Caesarism. Napoleon III and Bismarck of reactionary Caesarism.

The problem is to see whether in the dialectic "revolution/restoration" it is revolution or restoration which predominates; for it is certain that in the movement of history there is never any

<sup>9</sup> As is clear from another note (PP, p. 189) this term was suggested to Gramsci by the analogy commonly drawn in fascist Italy between Caesar and Mussolini. Gramsci pours scorn on the "theory of Caesarism", on the idea that Caesar "transformed Rome from a city-state into the capital of the Empire"—and by implication on the idea that Mussolini had effected a similar transformation in the status of modern Italy.

<sup>10</sup> The death of Lorenzo in 1492 marked the end of the internal balance of power between the Italian states, and the beginning of the period of foreign domination which was to last until the Risorgimento.

turning back, and that restorations *in toto* do not exist. Besides, Caesarism is a polemical-ideological formula, and not a canon of historical interpretation. A Caesarist solution can exist even without a Caesar, without any great, "heroic" and representative personality. The parliamentary system has also provided a mechanism for such compromise solutions. The "Labour" governments of MacDonald were to a certain degree solutions of this kind; and the degree of Caesarism increased when the government was formed which had MacDonald as its head and a Conservative majority.<sup>11</sup> Similarly in Italy from October 1922 until the defection of the "Popolari", and then by stages until 3 January 1925, and then until 8 November 1926,<sup>12</sup> there was a politico-historical movement in which various gradations of Caesarism succeeded each other, culminating in a more pure and permanent form—though even this was not static or immobile. Every coalition government is a first stage of Caesarism, which either may or may not develop to more significant stages (the common opinion of course is that coalition governments, on the contrary, are the most "solid bulwark" against Caesarism). In the modern world, with its great economic-trade-union and party-political coalitions, the mechanism of the Caesarist phenomenon is very different from what it was up to the time of Napoleon III. In the period up to Napoleon III, the regular military forces or soldiers of the line were a decisive element in the advent of Caesarism, and this came about through quite precise *coups d'état*, through military actions, etc. In the modern world trade-union and political forces, with the limitless financial means which may be at the disposal of small groups of citizens, complicate the problem. The functionaries of the parties and economic unions can be corrupted or terrorised, without any need for military action in the grand style—of the Caesar or 18 Brumaire type. The same situation recurs in this field as was examined in connection with the Jacobin/Forty-eightist formula of the so-called "Permanent Revolution".<sup>13</sup> Modern political tech-

<sup>11</sup> i.e. the formation of the National Government after MacDonald's abandonment of the Labour Party in 1931.

<sup>12</sup> October 1922 was the date of the March on Rome. The Popular Party (see note 14 on p. 62 above) at first supported the fascists in parliament and joined the government. In the summer of 1923, however, it split on the issue of policy towards the fascists, and in the elections of January 1924 it presented its own list of candidates. After the elections it refused to join a common front of opposition parties. On 3 January 1925, the fascist government suppressed freedom of the press. On 8 November 1926 the opposition parties were formally dissolved, and non-fascist deputies were declared to be stripped of their mandates—Gramsci among them (he was arrested on the same day). <sup>13</sup> See note 49 on p. 80.

nique became totally transformed after Forty-eight; after the expansion of parliamentarism and of the associative systems of union and party, and the growth in the formation of vast State and "private" bureaucracies (i.e. politico-private, belonging to parties and trade unions); and after the transformations which took place in the organisation of the forces of order in the wide sense—i.e. not only the public service designed for the repression of crime, but the totality of forces organised by the State and by private individuals to safeguard the political and economic domination of the ruling classes. In this sense, entire "political" parties and other organisations—economic or otherwise—must be considered as organs of political order, of an investigational and preventive character. The generic schema of forces A and B in conflict with catastrophic prospects—i.e. with the prospect that neither A nor B will be victorious, in the struggle to constitute (or reconstitute) an organic equilibrium, from which Caesarism is born (can be born)—is precisely a generic hypothesis, a sociological schema (convenient for the art of politics). It is possible to render the hypothesis ever more concrete, to carry it to an ever greater degree of approximation to concrete historical reality, and this can be achieved by defining certain fundamental elements.

Thus, in speaking of A and B, it has merely been asserted that they are respectively a generically progressive, and a generically reactionary, force. But one might specify the type of progressive and reactionary force involved, and so obtain closer approximations. In the case of Caesar and of Napoleon I, it can be said that A and B, though distinct and in conflict, were nevertheless not such as to be "absolutely" incapable of arriving, after a molecular process, at a reciprocal fusion and assimilation. And this was what in fact happened, at least to a certain degree (sufficient, however, for the historico-political objectives in question—i.e. the halting of the fundamental organic struggle, and hence the transcendence of the catastrophic phase). This is one element of closer approximation. Another such element is the following: the catastrophic phase may be brought about by a "momentary" political deficiency of the traditional dominant force, and not by any necessarily insuperable organic deficiency. This was true in the case of Napoleon III. The dominant force in France from 1815 up to 1848 had split politically (factiously) into four camps: legitimists, Orleanists, Bonapartists, Jacobin-republicans. The internal faction struggle was such as to make possible the advance of the rival force B (progressive) in a precocious form; however, the existing social form had not yet



exhausted its possibilities for development, as subsequent history abundantly demonstrated. Napoleon III represented (in his own manner, as fitted the stature of the man, which was not great) these latent and immanent possibilities: his Caesarism therefore has a particular coloration. The Caesarism of Caesar and Napoleon I was, so to speak, of a quantitative/qualitative character; in other words it represented the historical phase of passage from one type of State to another type—a passage in which the innovations were so numerous, and of such a nature, that they represented a complete revolution. The Caesarism of Napoleon III was merely, and in a limited fashion, quantitative; there was no passage from one type of State to another, but only “evolution” of the same type along unbroken lines.

In the modern world, Caesarist phenomena are quite different, both from those of the progressive Caesar/Napoleon I type, and from those of the Napoleon III type—although they tend towards the latter. In the modern world, the equilibrium with catastrophic prospects occurs not between forces which could in the last analysis fuse and unite—albeit after a wearying and bloody process—but between forces whose opposition is historically incurable and indeed becomes especially acute with the advent of Caesarist forms. However, in the modern world Caesarism also has a certain margin—larger or smaller, depending on the country and its relative weight in the global context. For a social form “always” has marginal possibilities for further development and organisational improvement, and in particular can count on the relative weakness of the rival progressive force as a result of its specific character and way of life. It is necessary for the dominant social form to preserve this weakness: this is why it has been asserted that modern Caesarism is more a police than a military system. [1933–34: 1st version 1932]

It would be an error of method (an aspect of sociological mechanism) to believe that in Caesarism—whether progressive, reactionary, or of an intermediate and episodic character—the entire new historical phenomenon is due to the equilibrium of the “fundamental” forces. It is also necessary to see the interplay of relations between the principal groups (of various kinds, socio-economic and technical-economic) of the fundamental classes and the auxiliary forces directed by, or subjected to, their hegemonic influence. Thus it would be impossible to understand the *coup d'état* of 2 December<sup>14</sup>

<sup>14</sup> i.e. the *coup d'état* whereby Louis Napoleon came to power.

without studying the function of the French military groups and peasantry.

A very important historical episode from this point of view is the so-called Dreyfus affair in France. This too belongs to the present series of observations, not because it led to “Caesarism”, indeed precisely for the opposite reason: because it prevented the advent of a Caesarism in gestation, of a clearly reactionary nature. Nevertheless, the Dreyfus movement is characteristic, since it was a case in which elements of the dominant social bloc itself thwarted the Caesarism of the most reactionary part of that same bloc. And they did so by relying for support not on the peasantry and the countryside, but on the subordinate strata in the towns under the leadership of reformist socialists (though they did in fact draw support from the most advanced part of the peasantry as well). There are other modern historico-political movements of the Dreyfus type to be found, which are certainly not revolutions, but which are not entirely reactionary either—at least in the sense that they shatter stifling and ossified State structures in the dominant camp as well, and introduce into national life and social activity a different and more numerous personnel.<sup>15</sup> These movements too can have a relatively “progressive” content, in so far as they indicate that there were effective forces latent in the old society which the old leaders did not know how to exploit—perhaps even “marginal forces”. However, such forces cannot be absolutely progressive, in that they are not “epochal”. They are rendered historically effective by their adversary’s inability to construct, not by an inherent force of their own. Hence they are linked to a particular situation of equilibrium between the conflicting forces—both incapable in their respective camps of giving autonomous expression to a will for reconstruction. [1933]

#### THE FABLE OF THE BEAVER

(The beaver, pursued by trappers who want his testicles from which medicinal drugs can be extracted, to save his life tears off his own testicles.) Why was there no defence? Because the parties had

<sup>15</sup> This passage appears to refer to fascism again—particularly if it is related to the passage on “Self-criticism and the Hypocrisy of Self-criticism” on pp. 254–7 below, where Gramsci makes similar points about the non-“epochal” character of the régime, and about its “relatively” progressive character *vis-à-vis* the preceding bourgeois régime. In the other passage, Gramsci is careful to stress that it is important in making any such judgement “to exclude the slightest appearance of support for the ‘absolutist’ tendency, and that can be achieved by insisting on the ‘transitory’ character of the phenomenon . . .”.

little sense of human or political dignity? But such factors are not natural phenomena, deficiencies inherent in a people as permanent characteristics. They are "historical facts", whose explanation is to be found in past history and in the social conditions of the present. *Apparent contradictions*: there predominated a fatalistic and mechanistic conception of history (Florence, 1917, accusation of Bergsonianism),<sup>16</sup> and yet positions taken up were characterised by a formalistic, crude and superficial voluntarism. For example, the 1920 plan to establish an urban council in Bologna, restricted to organised elements.<sup>17</sup> This would only have created a useless duplicate, replacing an organism with historical roots in the masses like the *Camera del Lavoro* by an organism of a purely abstract and bookish kind. Did the plan at least have the political aim of transferring hegemony to the urban element [the proletariat]? (The latter, with the establishment of the council, would have acquired a centre of its own—given that the *Camera del Lavoro* was organised on a provincial basis.) There was no question of any intention of this kind, and in any case the project was never carried out.

Treves' "expiation" speech.<sup>18</sup> This speech is fundamental for understanding the political confusion and polemical dilettantism of the leaders. Such skirmishes concealed these leaders' fear of concrete responsibilities, and that fear in turn concealed the absence of any unity with the class they represented, any comprehension of its fundamental needs, its aspirations, its latent energies. Paternalistic party, of petits bourgeois with an inflated idea of their own importance.<sup>19</sup> Why no defence? The notion of war psychosis,

<sup>16</sup> See note 28 on p. 343. This passage analyses the suicidal passivity of Italian maximalism and reformism before fascism.

<sup>17</sup> There was a prolonged polemic in 1919–20 between the *Ordine Nuovo* conception of factory councils as organs of the entire working class (including those not organised in the socialist party or in trade unions) and the majority opinion in the PSI which was horrified at this notion. The *Ordine Nuovo* group would certainly have applied similar criteria to the formation of other forms of council, such as the territorial "soviet" mentioned here.

<sup>18</sup> Claudio Treves (1869–1933) was together with Turati the main leader of the reformist wing of the PSI, and, after their expulsion in 1922, of the reformist PSUI, until he went into exile in 1926. On 30 March 1920 he made what became known as his "expiation" speech, in which he described the tragic situation, the expiation, of the ruling classes in a situation in which the bourgeoisie was powerless to carry on effectively, while the proletariat was not yet ready to exercise power. See also note 20 on p. 225.

<sup>19</sup> In Italian *che fanno le mosche cochiere*, an allusion to La Fontaine's fable *Le Coche et la Mouche*, which recounts the story of a fly who thinks that it is due to his efforts that a coach drawn by six horses succeeds in ascending a steep hill; the poem ends: "Ainsi certains gens, faisant les empressés, S'introduisent dans les affaires: Ils font partout les nécessaires, Et, partout importuns, devraient être chassés."

and the belief that a civilised country cannot "allow" certain violences to take place.

These generalities too were masks for other, deeper motives (besides, they were in contradiction with what was repeated each time a massacre occurred: We have always said, for our part, that the ruling class is reactionary!), whose core once again was the fact of separation from the class, i.e. the existence of "two classes". There was a failure to grasp what would happen if reaction triumphed, because the real struggle was not lived—only the struggle as a doctrinal "principle". A further contradiction with respect to voluntarism: if one is against voluntarism, one ought to appreciate "spontaneity". But in fact the opposite was the case: what was "spontaneous" was inferior, not worth considering, not even worth analysing. In reality, the "spontaneous" was the most crushing proof of the party's ineptitude, because it demonstrated the gulf between the fine-sounding programmes and the wretched deeds. But in the meantime the "spontaneous" events occurred (1919–20), damaged interests, disturbed settled positions, aroused terrible hatreds even among peaceful folk, brought out of their passivity social strata which had been stagnating in putridity.<sup>20</sup> They created, precisely because of their "spontaneity" and because they were disavowed, the generic "panic", the "great fear" which could not fail to unify the forces of repression which would crush them without pity.

The so-called pact of alliance between Confederation and Party,<sup>21</sup>

<sup>20</sup> In other words, the "spontaneous" activity of the Italian working class and peasantry in 1919–20 provoked a back-lash among the traditionally "apolitical" petit-bourgeois strata. Gramsci analyses this apoliticism elsewhere (PP, pp. 11–12). See too PP, p. 54, where he wrote: "Treves' 'expiation' speech and the obsession with interventionism are closely linked: what is involved is a policy of avoiding the basic problem, the problem of power, and of diverting the attention and the passions of the masses on to secondary objectives; of hypocritically concealing the historical and political responsibility of the ruling class, channelling popular anger against material and often unconscious instruments of ruling-class policies; in essence, this policy was a continuation of that of Giolitti. . . . It was obvious that the war, with the immense economic and psychological upheaval which it had brought about—especially among the petty intellectuals and the petits bourgeois—was going to radicalise these strata. The party turned them gratuitously into enemies, instead of making allies of them, i.e. it threw them back towards the ruling class." (The party alluded to is, of course, the PSI—the PCI was not founded until 1921—and the obsession with interventionism to which Gramsci refers was the tendency of the socialists in the post-war period to use as the basic criterion for all political judgements the stance taken up in 1914–15 on the question of Italian intervention in the war.)

<sup>21</sup> i.e. the agreement of 29 September 1918, whereby the PSI and the CGL defined their respective fields of activity: e.g. the party would direct all political strikes, the CGL all economic ones "without obstructing each other".

which can be compared to a concordat between State and Church, constitutes an exceptional document of this gulf between represented and representatives. The party, which is an embryonic State structure, can allow no division of its political powers. It cannot permit a part of its members to claim rights equal to its own, to pose as allies of the "whole"—just as a State cannot allow a part of its subjects to make (via a foreign power) a special contract, over and above the general laws, governing their relations with it, i.e. with the very State to which they belong. To admit such a situation would imply the subordination *de facto* and *de jure* of the State and of the party to the so-called majority of the represented: in reality, to a group which poses itself as anti-State and anti-party and which ends up by indirectly exercising power. In the case of the pact of alliance it was clear that power did not lie with the party.

The curious relations obtaining between party and parliamentary group likewise corresponded to the pact of alliance; these too took the form of an alliance with equal rights. This system of relations meant that the party had no concrete existence as an independent organism, but merely as one constitutive element of a more complex organism which had all the characteristics of a labour party—without a centre, without any unitary will, etc. Must the unions therefore be subordinated to the party? This is not the right way to pose the question. The problem must be posed in the following terms: every member of the party, whatever his position or his responsibilities, is still a member of the party and subordinate to its leadership. There cannot be subordination between union and party: if the union has spontaneously chosen as its leader a member of the party, that means that the union freely accepts the directives of the party, hence freely accepts (indeed desires) control by the party over its officials. This problem was not posed correctly in 1919, although there existed a great and instructive precedent, that of June 1914.<sup>22</sup> For in reality, the fractions had no policy, and hence neither did the party. [1930]

<sup>22</sup> In June 1914, after the massacre of workers at Ancona (see note 33 on p. 70), the General Strike called by the PSI was briefly and reluctantly supported, and subsequently sabotaged, by the CGL. Gramsci points out that, despite this, the PSI in 1919 had not learnt its lesson with reference to the CGL. In August 1920, on the eve of the factory occupations, Gramsci had in fact written in *Ordine Nuovo*: "Today . . . at a moment when the revolutionary period may impel the Party into action from one moment to the next, the Italian movement is in a situation where not only it has not resolved in practice the problem of the relations between party and trade union, but it has not even raised the question. The Italian proletarian movement is the field of activity of two political parties: the official one and the *de facto* one constituted by the trade-union leaders."

## AGITATION AND PROPAGANDA

The weakness of the Italian political parties (excepting to some extent the Nationalist party) throughout their period of activity, from the Risorgimento onwards, has consisted in what one might call an imbalance between agitation and propaganda—though it can also be termed lack of principle, opportunism, absence of organic continuity, imbalance between tactics and strategy, etc. The principal reason why the parties are like this is to be sought in the deliquescence of the economic classes, in the gelatinous economic and social structure of the country—but this explanation is somewhat fatalistic. In fact, if it is true that parties are only the nomenclature for classes, it is also true that parties are not simply a mechanical and passive expression of those classes, but react energetically upon them in order to develop, solidify and universalise them. This precisely did not occur in Italy, and the result of this "omission" is precisely the imbalance between agitation and propaganda—or however else one wishes to term it.

The State/government has a certain responsibility in this state of affairs: one can call it a responsibility, in so far as it prevented the strengthening of the State itself, i.e. demonstrated that the State/government was not a national factor. The government in fact operated as a "party". It set itself over and above the parties, not so as to harmonise their interests and activities within the permanent framework of the life and interests of the nation and State, but so as to disintegrate them, to detach them from the broad masses and obtain "a force of non-party men linked to the government by paternalistic ties of a Bonapartist-Caesarist type". This is the way in which the so-called *dictatorships* of Depretis, Crispi and Giolitti, and the parliamentary phenomenon of transformism,<sup>23</sup> should be analysed. Classes produce parties, and parties form the personnel of State and government, the leaders of civil and political society. There must be a useful and fruitful relation in these manifestations and functions. There cannot be any formation of leaders without the theoretical, doctrinal activity of parties,

<sup>23</sup> For "*trasformismo*", see note 8 on p. 58; for Crispi, note 24 on p. 66; for Giolitti, note 68 on p. 94. Agostino Depretis (1813-87) was at first a Mazzinian; later, in Sicily with Garibaldi, he was in fact working for Cavour. In 1876 he became the first "Left" prime minister, and dominated parliamentary life until his death. He chose his ministers from both sides of the parliament, in the process which became known as transformism; Crispi called this means of securing his personal power a "parliamentary dictatorship", but did the same himself when in power.

without a systematic attempt to discover and study the causes which govern the nature of the class represented and the way in which it has developed. Hence, scarcity of State and government personnel; squalor of parliamentary life; ease with which the parties can be disintegrated, by corruption and absorption of the few individuals who are indispensable. Hence, squalor of cultural life and wretched inadequacy of high culture. Instead of political history, bloodless erudition; instead of religion, superstition; instead of books and great reviews, daily papers and broadsheets; instead of serious politics, ephemeral quarrels and personal clashes. The universities, and all the institutions which develop intellectual and technical abilities, since they were not permeated by the life of the parties, by the living realities of national life, produced apolitical national cadres, with a purely rhetorical and non-national mental formation. Thus the bureaucracy became estranged from the country, and via its administrative positions became a true political party, the worst of all, because the bureaucratic hierarchy replaced the intellectual and political hierarchy. The bureaucracy became precisely the State/Bonapartist party.\* [1930]

#### THE "PHILOSOPHY OF THE EPOCH"

The discussion on force and consent has shown that political science is relatively advanced in Italy, and is treated with a certain frankness of expression—even by individuals holding responsible positions in the State. The discussion in question is the debate about the "philosophy of the epoch", about the central theme in the lives of the various states in the post-war period. How to reconstruct the hegemonic apparatus of the ruling group, an apparatus which disintegrated as a result of the war, in every state throughout the world? Moreover, why did this apparatus disintegrate? Perhaps because a strong antagonistic<sup>24</sup> collective political will developed? If this were the case, the question would have been resolved in favour of such an antagonist. In reality, it disintegrated under the impact of purely mechanical causes, of various kinds: 1. because great masses, previously passive, entered into movement—but into

\* See the books which after 1919 criticised a "similar" state of affairs (but far richer in terms of the life of "civil society") in the Kaiser's Germany, for example Max Weber's book *Parliament and Government in the German New Order: a Political Critique of Bureaucracy and Party Life*. Translation and preface by Enrico Rota, pp. xvi, 200—the translation is very imperfect and imprecise.

<sup>24</sup> i.e. antagonistic to the existing capitalist and bourgeois order.

a chaotic and disorganised movement, without leadership, i.e. without any precise collective political will; 2. because the middle classes, who during the war held positions of command and responsibility, when peace came were deprived of these and left unemployed—precisely after having learned how to command, etc.; 3. because the antagonistic forces proved to be incapable of organising this situation of disorder to their own advantage. The problem was to reconstruct a hegemonic apparatus for these formerly passive and apolitical elements. It was impossible to achieve this without the use of force—which could not be "legal" force, etc. Since the complex of social relations was different in each state, the political methods of using force and the ways in which legal and illegal forces were combined had to be equally diverse. The greater the mass of the apolitical, the greater the part played by illegal forces has to be. The greater the politically organised and educated forces, the more it is necessary to "cover" the legal State, etc. [1930-32]

#### POLITICAL STRUGGLE AND MILITARY WAR

In military war, when the strategic aim—destruction of the enemy's army and occupation of his territory—is achieved, peace comes. It should also be observed that for war to come to an end, it is enough that the strategic aim should simply be achieved potentially: it is enough in other words that there should be no doubt that an army is no longer able to fight, and that the victorious army "could" occupy the enemy's territory. Political struggle is enormously more complex: in a certain sense, it can be compared to colonial wars or to old wars of conquest—in which the victorious army occupies, or proposes to occupy, permanently all or a part of the conquered territory. Then the defeated army is disarmed and dispersed, but the struggle continues on the terrain of politics and of military "preparation".

Thus India's political struggle against the English (and to a certain extent that of Germany against France, or of Hungary against the Little Entente) knows three forms of war: war of movement, war of position, and underground warfare. Gandhi's passive resistance is a war of position, which at certain moments becomes a war of movement, and at others underground warfare. Boycotts are a form of war of position, strikes of war of movement, the secret preparation of weapons and combat troops belongs to

underground warfare. A kind of commando tactics<sup>25</sup> is also to be found, but it can only be utilised with great circumspection. If the English believed that a great insurrectional movement was being prepared, destined to annihilate their present strategic superiority (which consists, in a certain sense, in their ability to manoeuvre through control of the internal lines of communication, and to concentrate their forces at the "sporadically" most dangerous spot) by mass suffocation—i.e. by compelling them to spread out their forces over a theatre of war which had simultaneously become generalised—then it would suit them to *provoke* a premature outbreak of the Indian fighting forces, in order to identify them and decapitate the general movement. Similarly it would suit France if the German Nationalist Right were to be involved in an adventurist *coup d'état*; for this would oblige the suspected illegal military organisation to show itself prematurely, and so permit an intervention which from the French point of view would be timely. It is thus evident that in these forms of mixed struggle—fundamentally of a military character, but mainly fought on the political plane (though in fact every political struggle always has a military substratum)—the use of commando squads requires an original tactical development, for which the experience of war can only provide a stimulus, and not a model.

The question of the Balkan *comitadjis*<sup>26</sup> requires separate treat-

<sup>25</sup> "*Arditismo*." During the First World War, the "*arditi*" were volunteer commando squads in the Italian army. The term was adopted by d'Annunzio for his nationalist volunteer "legions", and was also used by the "*arditi del popolo*", formed to combat the fascist squads in the summer of 1921. This latter organisation emerged outside the left parties, but the mass of its local leaders and members were communist or socialist. The PSI (who signed a "conciliation pact" with the fascists at this time) condemned the organisation; they advocated a policy of non-resistance. The PCI also condemned the organisation, for sectarian reasons, preferring to concentrate on its own, purely communist, defence squads. Gramsci had written and published articles welcoming the organisation before the official condemnation, and even afterwards did so obliquely, by criticising the PSI's attitude. However, as his comments later in this note indicate, he did not feel that working-class "*arditi*" could in fact hope to stand up to the fascist squads, who enjoyed the connivance of the State. It was only *mass* as opposed to *volunteer* action which could provide a viable response.

<sup>26</sup> In the late nineteenth century, Turkey still occupied large parts of the Balkans—what are now Albania, Northern Greece, Southern Yugoslavia and Southern Bulgaria—including the whole of the area traditionally known as Macedonia (now divided between Yugoslavia, Greece and to a lesser extent Bulgaria). In 1893 a revolutionary Macedonian committee was set up in Sophia by the Macedonian nationalists Delcev and Grujev, and this committee began to send armed bands (*comitadjis*) across the border into Turkish territory. Their aim—strongly opposed by the Young Turks—was at least some measure of Macedonian autonomy. All the surrounding countries—Bulgaria, Serbia and

ment; they are related to particular conditions of the region's geophysical environment, to the particular formation of the rural classes, and also to the real effectiveness of the governments there. The same is true with the Irish bands,<sup>27</sup> whose form of warfare and of organisation was related to the structure of Irish society. The *comitadjis*, the Irish, and the other forms of partisan warfare have to be separated from the question of commandos, although they appear to have points of contact. These forms of struggle are specific to weak, but restive, minorities confronted by well-organised majorities: modern commandos on the contrary presuppose a large reserve-force, immobilised for one reason or another but potentially effective, which gives them support and sustenance in the form of individual contributions.

The relationship which existed in 1917–18 between the commando units and the army as a whole can lead, and has led, political leaders to draw up erroneous plans of campaign. They forget: 1. that the commandos are simple tactical units, and do indeed presuppose an army which is not very effective—but not one which is completely inert. For even though discipline and fighting spirit have slackened to the point where a new tactical deployment has become advisable, they still do exist to a certain degree—a degree to which the new tactical formation precisely corresponds. Otherwise there could only be rout, and headlong flight; 2. that the phenomenon of commandos should not be considered as a sign of the general combativity of the mass of the troops, but, on the contrary, as a sign of their passivity and relative demoralisation. But in saying all this, the general criterion should be kept in mind that comparisons between military art and politics, if made, should always be taken *cum grano salis* [with a pinch of salt]—in other words, as stimuli to thought, or as terms in a *reductio ad absurdum*. In actual fact, in the case of the political militia there is neither any implacable penal sanction for whoever makes a mistake or does not obey an order exactly, nor do courts-martial exist—quite apart from the fact that the line-up of political forces is not even remotely comparable to the line-up of military forces.

In political struggle, there also exist other forms of warfare—apart from the war of movement and siege warfare or the war of

Greece—formed their own armed bands (*çetes*) in the years that followed (as did the Vlachs), to protect their own interests in the area. These bands fought each other at the same time as they fought the Turks.

<sup>27</sup> Presumably a reference to the Fenian bands, who rose against British rule unsuccessfully in 1867 and continued sporadic activity during the latter years of the century.

position. True, i.e. modern, commandos belong to the war of position, in its 1914-18 form. The war of movement and siege warfare of the preceding periods also had their commandos, in a certain sense. The light and heavy cavalry, crack rifle corps,<sup>28</sup> etc.—and indeed mobile forces in general—partly functioned as commandos. Similarly the art of organising patrols contained the germ of modern commandos. This germ was contained in siege warfare more than in the war of movement: more extensive use of patrols, and particularly the art of organising sudden sorties and surprise attacks with picked men.

Another point to be kept in mind is that in political struggle one should not ape the methods of the ruling classes, or one will fall into easy ambushes. In the current struggles this phenomenon often occurs. A weakened State structure is like a flagging army; the commandos—i.e. the private armed organisations—enter the field, and they have two tasks: to make use of illegal means, while the State appears to remain within legality, and thus to reorganise the State itself. It is stupid to believe that when one is confronted by illegal private action one can counterpose to it another similar action—in other words, combat commando tactics by means of commando tactics. It means believing that the State remains perpetually inert, which is never the case—quite apart from all the other conditions which differ. The class factor leads to a fundamental difference: a class which has to work fixed hours every day cannot have permanent and specialised assault organisations—as can a class which has ample financial resources and all of whose members are not tied down by fixed work. At any hour of day or night, these by now professional organisations are able to strike decisive blows, and strike them unawares. Commando tactics cannot therefore have the same importance for some classes as for others. For certain classes a war of movement and manoeuvre is necessary—because it is the form of war which belongs to them; and this, in the case of political struggle, may include a valuable and perhaps indispensable use of commando tactics. But to fix one's mind on the military model is the mark of a fool: politics, here too, must have priority over its military aspect, and only politics creates the possibility for manoeuvre and movement.

From all that has been said it follows that in the phenomenon of military commandos, it is necessary to distinguish between the technical function of commandos as a special force linked to the

<sup>28</sup> "Bersaglieri"—an élite corps of the Italian army, founded by Lamarmora in 1836.

modern war of position, and their politico-military function. As a special force commandos were used by all armies in the World War. But they have only had a politico-military function in those countries which are politically enfeebled and non-homogeneous, and which are therefore represented by a not very combative national army, and a bureaucratised General Staff, grown rusty in the service. [1929-30]

On the subject of parallels between on the one hand the concepts of war of manoeuvre and war of position in military science, and on the other the corresponding concepts in political science, Rosa [Luxemburg]'s little book, translated (from French) into Italian in 1919 by C. Alessandri, should be recalled.<sup>29</sup>

In this book, Rosa—a little hastily, and rather superficially too— theorised the historical experiences of 1905. She in fact disregarded the "voluntary" and organisational elements which were far more extensive and important in those events than—thanks to a certain "economistic" and spontaneist prejudice—she tended to believe. All the same, this little book (like others of the same author's essays) is one of the most significant documents theorizing the war of manoeuvre in relation to political science. The immediate economic element (crises, etc.) is seen as the field artillery which in war opens a breach in the enemy's defences—a breach sufficient for one's own troops to rush in and obtain a definitive (strategic) victory, or at least an important victory in the context of the strategic line. Naturally the effects of immediate economic factors in historical science are held to be far more complex than the effects of heavy artillery in a war of manoeuvre, since they are conceived of as having a double effect: 1. they breach the enemy's defences, after throwing him into disarray and causing him to lose faith in himself, his forces, and his future; 2. in a flash they organise one's own troops and create the necessary cadres—or at least in a flash they put the existing cadres (formed, until that moment, by the general historical process) in positions which enable them to encadre one's scattered forces; 3. in a flash they bring about the necessary ideological concentration on the common objective to be achieved. This view was a form of iron economic determinism, with the aggravating factor that it was conceived of as operating with lightning speed in time and in space. It was thus out and out historical mysticism, the awaiting of a sort of miraculous illumination.

<sup>29</sup> Rosa Luxemburg: *The General Strike—the party and the unions*. The Italian edition was published by Società Editrice "Avanti!" in Milan, 1919.

General Krasnov asserted (in his novel)<sup>30</sup> that the Entente did not wish for the victory of Imperial Russia (for fear that the Eastern Question would be definitively resolved in favour of Tsarism), and therefore obliged the Russian General Staff to adopt trench warfare (absurd, in view of the enormous length of the Front from the Baltic to the Black Sea, with vast marshy and forest zones), whereas the only possible strategy was a war of manœuvre. This assertion is merely silly. In actual fact, the Russian Army did attempt a war of manœuvre and sudden incursion, especially in the Austrian sector (but also in East Prussia), and won successes which were as brilliant as they were ephemeral. The truth is that one cannot choose the form of war one wants, unless from the start one has a crushing superiority over the enemy. It is well known what losses were caused by the stubborn refusal of the General Staffs to recognise that a war of position was "imposed" by the overall relation of the forces in conflict. A war of position is not, in reality, constituted simply by the actual trenches, but by the whole organisational and industrial system of the territory which lies to the rear of the army in the field. It is imposed notably by the rapid fire-power of cannons, machine-guns and rifles, by the armed strength which can be concentrated at a particular spot, as well as by the abundance of supplies which make possible the swift replacement of material lost after an enemy breakthrough or a retreat. A further factor is the great mass of men under arms; they are of very unequal calibre, and are precisely only able to operate as a mass force. It can be seen how on the Eastern Front it was one thing to make an incursion in the Austrian Sector, and quite another in the German Sector; and how even in the Austrian Sector, reinforced by picked German troops and commanded by Germans, incursion tactics ended in disaster. The same thing occurred in the Polish campaign of 1920; the seemingly irresistible advance was halted before Warsaw by General Weygand, on the line commanded by French officers.<sup>31</sup> Even those military experts whose minds are now fixed on the war of position, just as they were

<sup>30</sup> P. N. Krasnov, *From Two-headed Eagle to Red Flag*, Berlin, 1921. Italian edition, Florence, 1928.

<sup>31</sup> The Red Army under Tukhachevsky was halted at the gates of Warsaw in August 1920, in its counter-offensive following Pilsudski's invasion of the Soviet Union. The defeat was followed by controversy both concerning the viability of the entire attempt to "export revolution" without the support of the local population, and concerning the specific responsibilities for the defeat (Budyenny and Egorov, supported by Stalin, had not followed the orders of S. Kamenev, the commander-in-chief, and had marched on Lvov instead of linking up with Tukhachevsky before Warsaw).

previously on that of manœuvre, naturally do not maintain that the latter should be considered as expunged from military science. They merely maintain that, in wars among the more industrially and socially advanced States, the war of manœuvre must be considered as reduced to more of a tactical than a strategic function; that it must be considered as occupying the same position as siege warfare used to occupy previously in relation to it.

The same reduction must take place in the art and science of politics, at least in the case of the most advanced States, where "civil society" has become a very complex structure and one which is resistant to the catastrophic "incursions" of the immediate economic element (crises, depressions, etc.). The superstructures of civil society are like the trench-systems of modern warfare. In war it would sometimes happen that a fierce artillery attack seemed to have destroyed the enemy's entire defensive system, whereas in fact it had only destroyed the outer perimeter; and at the moment of their advance and attack the assailants would find themselves confronted by a line of defence which was still effective. The same thing happens in politics, during the great economic crises. A crisis cannot give the attacking forces the ability to organise with lightning speed in time and in space; still less can it endow them with fighting spirit. Similarly, the defenders are not demoralised, nor do they abandon their positions, even among the ruins, nor do they lose faith in their own strength or their own future. Of course, things do not remain exactly as they were; but it is certain that one will not find the element of speed, of accelerated time, of the definitive forward march expected by the strategists of political Cadornism.<sup>32</sup>

The last occurrence of the kind in the history of politics was the events of 1917. They marked a decisive turning-point in the history of the art and science of politics. Hence it is a question of studying "in depth" which elements of civil society correspond to the defensive systems in a war of position. The use of the phrase "in depth" is intentional, because 1917 has been studied—but only either from superficial and banal viewpoints, as when certain social historians study the vagaries of women's fashions, or from a "rationalistic" viewpoint—in other words, with the conviction that certain phenomena are destroyed as soon as they are "realistically" explained, as if they were popular superstitions (which anyway are not destroyed either merely by being explained).

The question of the meagre success achieved by new tendencies

<sup>32</sup> See note 29 on p. 145.

in the trade-union movement should be related to this series of problems.<sup>33</sup> One attempt to begin a revision of the current tactical methods was perhaps that outlined by L. Dav. Br. [Trotsky] at the fourth meeting, when he made a comparison between the Eastern and Western fronts.<sup>34</sup> The former had fallen at once, but unprecedented struggles had then ensued; in the case of the latter, the struggles would take place "beforehand". The question, therefore, was whether civil society resists before or after the attempt to seize power; where the latter takes place, etc. However, the question was outlined only in a brilliant, literary form, without directives of a practical character. [1933-34: 1st version 1930-32.]

It should be seen whether Bronstein's famous theory about the permanent character of the movement<sup>35</sup> is not the political reflection of the theory of war of manoeuvre (recall the observation of the cossack general Krasnov)—i.e. in the last analysis, a reflection of the general-economic-cultural-social conditions in a country in which the structures of national life are embryonic and loose, and incapable of becoming "trench or fortress". In this case one might

<sup>33</sup> This is presumably a reference to the failure of communists in Italy between 1921 and 1926 to win more than a minority position within the trade-union movement, despite the betrayals of the CGL's reformist leaders.

<sup>34</sup> The "fourth meeting" is the Fourth World Congress of the Comintern, at which Gramsci was present. Trotsky gave the report on NEP, in the course of which he said: ". . . it will hardly be possible to catch the European bourgeoisie by surprise as we caught the Russian bourgeoisie. The European bourgeoisie is more intelligent, and more farsighted; it is not wasting time. Everything that can be set on foot against us is being mobilised by it right now. The revolutionary proletariat will thus encounter on its road to power not only the combat vanguards of the counter-revolution but also its heaviest reserves. Only by smashing, breaking up and demoralising these enemy forces will the proletariat be able to seize state power. By way of compensation, after the proletarian overturn, the vanquished bourgeoisie will no longer dispose of powerful reserves from which it could draw forces for prolonging the civil war. In other words, after the conquest of power, the European proletariat will in all likelihood have far more elbow room for its creative work in economy and culture than we had in Russia on the day after the overturn. The more difficult and gruelling the struggle for state power, all the less possible will it be to challenge the proletariat's power after the victory." Trotsky, *The First Five Years of the Communist International*, Vol. II, pp. 221-22, Pioneer, New York 1953.

<sup>35</sup> i.e. Trotsky's theory of Permanent Revolution. Paradoxically, in view of Gramsci's analogy here, in the military debate of 1920-21 Trotsky was the main opponent of war of manoeuvre, or the tactic of the revolutionary offensive, which was put forward by those civil war generals who supported the idea of a "proletarian military science"—Frunze, Budyenny and also Tukhachevsky. Moreover, he also delivered the main attack at the Third Comintern Congress on the "theory of the offensive" in the political sphere; its main supporters were the PCI (see General Introduction), the Left in the German party, and Bela Kun. It should also perhaps be noted that the reference to Foch's unified command being a possible military equivalent of the "united front" in politics was hardly a happy analogy, since Foch in fact had leanings towards Napoleonic offensive tactics.

say that Bronstein, apparently "Western", was in fact a cosmopolitan—i.e. superficially national and superficially Western or European. Ilitch [Lenin] on the other hand was profoundly national and profoundly European.

Bronstein in his memoirs recalls being told that his theory had been proved true . . . fifteen years later, and replying to the epigram with another epigram.<sup>36</sup> In reality his theory, as such, was good neither fifteen years earlier nor fifteen years later. As happens to the obstinate, of whom Guicciardini speaks,<sup>37</sup> he guessed more or less correctly; that is to say, he was right in his more general practical prediction. It is as if one was to prophesy that a little four-year-old girl would become a mother, and when at twenty she did so one said: "I guessed that she would"—overlooking the fact, however, that when she was four years old one had tried to rape the girl, in the belief that she would become a mother even then. It seems to me that Ilitch understood that a change was necessary from the war of manoeuvre applied victoriously in the East in 1917, to a war of position which was the only form possible in the West—where, as Krasnov observes, armies could rapidly accumulate endless quantities of munitions, and where the social structures were of themselves still capable of becoming heavily-armed fortifications. This is what the formula of the "United Front"<sup>38</sup> seems to me to

<sup>36</sup> In *My Life*, pp. 157-58, Trotsky wrote: "Writing afterward in the inexact and slovenly manner which is peculiar to him, Lunacharsky described my revolutionary concept as follows: 'Comrade Trotsky held in 1905 that the two revolutions (the bourgeois and socialist), although they do not coincide, are bound to each other in such a way that they make a permanent revolution. After they have entered upon the revolutionary period through a bourgeois political revolution, the Russian section of the world, along with the rest, will not be able to escape from this period until the Social Revolution has been completed. It cannot be denied that in formulating this view Comrade Trotsky showed great insight and vision, albeit he erred to the extent of fifteen years.' The remark about my error of fifteen years does not become any more profound through its later repetition by Radek. All our estimates and slogans of 1905 were based on the assumption of a victorious revolution, and not of a defeat. We achieved then neither a republic nor a transfer of land, nor even an eight-hour day. Does it mean that we erred in putting these demands forward? The defeat of the revolution blanketed all prospects—not merely those which I had been expounding. The question was not of the dates of revolution but of the analysis of its inner forces and of foreseeing its progress as a whole."

<sup>37</sup> See *Ricordi*, Series II, No. 1: "He who therefore has faith becomes obstinate in what he believes and goes on his way intrepid and resolute, scorning difficulties and dangers. . . . Whence it comes to pass that, since worldly affairs are subjected to a thousand hazards and accidents, in the course of time there are many ways in which unhelped for help may come to whoever has persevered in his obstinacy. . . ."

<sup>38</sup> For the united front policy, launched by the Comintern Executive in December 1921, see General Introduction.



mean, and it corresponds to the conception of a single front for the Entente under the sole command of Foch.

Ilitch, however, did not have time to expand his formula—though it should be borne in mind that he could only have expanded it theoretically, whereas the fundamental task was a national one; that is to say it required a reconnaissance of the terrain and identification of the elements of trench and fortress represented by the elements of civil society, etc. In Russia the State was everything, civil society was primordial and gelatinous; in the West, there was a proper relation between State and civil society, and when the State trembled a sturdy structure of civil society was at once revealed. The State was only an outer ditch, behind which there stood a powerful system of fortresses and earthworks: more or less numerous from one State to the next, it goes without saying—but this precisely necessitated an accurate reconnaissance of each individual country.

Bronstein's theory can be compared to that of certain French syndicalists on the General Strike, and to Rosa [Luxemburg]'s theory in the work translated by Alessandri. Rosa's book and theories anyway influenced the French syndicalists, as is clear from some of Rosmer's<sup>89</sup> articles on Germany in *Vie Ouvrière* (first series in pamphlet form). It partly depends too on the theory of spontaneity. [1930-32]

#### THE TRANSITION FROM THE WAR OF MANŒUVRE (FRONTAL ATTACK) TO THE WAR OF POSITION—IN THE POLITICAL FIELD AS WELL

This seems to me to be the most important question of political theory that the post-war period has posed, and the most difficult to solve correctly. It is related to the problems raised by Bronstein [Trotsky], who in one way or another can be considered the political theorist of frontal attack in a period in which it only leads to defeats. This transition in political science is only indirectly (mediately) related to that which took place in the military field, although certainly a relation exists and an essential one. The war of position demands enormous sacrifices by infinite masses of people. So an unprecedented concentration of hegemony is necessary, and hence a more "interventionist" government, which will take the

<sup>89</sup> Alfred Rosmer was a revolutionary syndicalist during the First World War, and edited *La Vie Ouvrière* together with Pierre Monatte. They were both among the first leaders of the PCF, and Rosmer was editor of *Humanité* from 1923 to 1924. He was expelled in 1926 for supporting the Joint Opposition in the Russian Party.

offensive more openly against the oppositionists and organise permanently the "impossibility" of internal disintegration—with controls of every kind, political, administrative, etc., reinforcement of the hegemonic "positions" of the dominant group, etc. All this indicates that we have entered a culminating phase in the political-historical situation, since in politics the "war of position", once won, is decisive definitively. In politics, in other words, the war of manœuvre subsists so long as it is a question of winning positions which are not decisive, so that all the resources of the State's hegemony cannot be mobilised. But when, for one reason or another, these positions have lost their value and only the decisive positions are at stake, then one passes over to siege warfare; this is concentrated, difficult, and requires exceptional qualities of patience and inventiveness. In politics, the siege is a reciprocal one, despite all appearances, and the mere fact that the ruler has to muster all his resources demonstrates how seriously he takes his adversary. [1930-32]

"A resistance too long prolonged in a besieged camp is demoralising in itself. It implies suffering, fatigue, loss of rest, illness and the continual presence not of the acute danger which tempers but of the chronic danger which destroys." Karl Marx: *Eastern Question*. 14 September 1855.

#### POLITICS AND MILITARY SCIENCE

Tactic of great masses, and immediate tactic of small groups. Belongs to the discussion about war of position and war of movement, in so far as this is reflected in the psychology both of great leaders (strategists) and of their subordinates. It is also (if one can put it like that) the point of connection between strategy and tactics, both in politics and in military science. Individuals (even as components of vast masses) tend to conceive war instinctively as "partisan warfare" or "Garibaldine warfare" (which is a higher form of "partisan warfare"). In politics the error occurs as a result of an inaccurate understanding of what the State (in its integral meaning: dictatorship + hegemony) really is. In war a similar error occurs, transferred to the enemy camp (failure to understand not only one's own State but that of the enemy as well). In both cases, the error is related to individual particularism—of town or region; this leads to an underestimation of the adversary and his fighting organisation. [1930-32]

## INTERNATIONALISM AND NATIONAL POLICY

A work (in the form of questions and answers) by Joseph Vissarionovitch [Stalin] dating from September 1927: it deals with certain key problems of the science and art of politics.<sup>40</sup> The problem which seems to me to need further elaboration is the following: how, according to the philosophy of praxis (as it manifests itself politically)—whether as formulated by its founder [Marx] or particularly as restated by its most recent great theoretician [Lenin]—the international situation should be considered in its national aspect. In reality, the internal relations of any nation are the result of a combination which is “original” and (in a certain sense) unique: these relations must be understood and conceived in their originality and uniqueness if one wishes to dominate them and direct them. To be sure, the line of development is towards internationalism, but the point of departure is “national”—and it is from this point of departure that one must begin. Yet the perspective is international and cannot be otherwise. Consequently, it is necessary to study accurately the combination of national forces which the international class [the proletariat] will have to lead and develop, in accordance with the international perspective and directives [i.e. those of the Comintern]. The leading class is in fact only such if it accurately interprets this combination—of which it is itself a component and precisely as such is able to give the movement a certain direction, within certain perspectives. It is on this point, in my opinion, that the fundamental disagreement between Leo Davidovitch [Trotsky] and Vissarionovitch [Stalin] as interpreter of the majority movement [Bolshevism] really hinges. The accusations of nationalism are inept if they refer to the nucleus of

<sup>40</sup> This has usually been taken as a reference to Stalin's interview of September 1927 with the first American Labour Delegation. However, that interview contains nothing that seems likely to have suggested to Gramsci the reflections in this note; moreover, it is difficult to believe that he could have had any opportunity of reading a text of Stalin's which appeared after his arrest. He did have, on the other hand, among his books before his arrest an Italian translation, in pamphlet form, of Stalin's June 1925 text entitled “Questions and Answers” (a speech given at Sverdlov University), which perhaps appeared in Italian in September. It seems certain that this is the text to which Gramsci is referring. In it Stalin notably spoke of two forms of “liquidationist” danger in the Russian Party: 1. those who felt that there was no chance of building socialism in such a backward country as Russia; 2. those who felt that the fate of the Russian Revolution was entirely dependent on the international revolution. Stalin went on to speak of a “nationalist” danger caused by the pressure of the bourgeoisie in the field of foreign policy, and by lack of confidence in the international proletarian revolution, on the part of “the people who are handling our foreign policy”.

the question. If one studies the majoritarians' [Bolsheviks'] struggle from 1902 up to 1917, one can see that its originality consisted in purging internationalism of every vague and purely ideological (in a pejorative sense) element, to give it a realistic political content. It is in the concept of hegemony that those exigencies which are national in character are knotted together; one can well understand how certain tendencies either do not mention such a concept, or merely skim over it. A class that is international in character has—in as much as it guides social strata which are narrowly national (intellectuals), and indeed frequently even less than national: particularistic and municipalistic (the peasants)—to “nationalise” itself in a certain sense. Moreover, this sense is not a very narrow one either, since before the conditions can be created for an economy that follows a world plan, it is necessary to pass through multiple phases in which the regional combinations (of groups of nations) may be of various kinds. Furthermore, it must never be forgotten that historical development follows the laws of necessity until the initiative has decisively passed over to those forces which tend towards construction in accordance with a plan of peaceful and solidary division of labour [i.e. to the socialist forces]. That non-national concepts (i.e. ones that cannot be referred to each individual country) are erroneous can be seen *ab absurdo*: they have led to passivity and inertia in two quite distinct phases: 1. in the first phase, nobody believed that they ought to make a start—that is to say, they believed that by making a start they would find themselves isolated; they waited for everybody to move together, and nobody in the meantime moved or organised the movement; 2. the second phase is perhaps worse, because what is being awaited is an anachronistic and anti-natural form of “Napoleonism” (since not all historical phases repeat themselves in the same form).<sup>41</sup> The theoretical weaknesses of this modern form of the old mechanism are masked by the general theory of permanent revolution, which is nothing but a generic forecast presented as a dogma, and which demolishes itself by not in fact coming true. [1933]

<sup>41</sup> The first phase to which Gramsci refers is clearly that of the pre-war Second International. The second is presumably a reference to the internationalism increasingly invoked by Trotsky after 1924, and against the notion of Socialism in One Country; Gramsci is arguing that this implies an expectation of the revolution spreading out from Russia in the way that Napoleon's armies carried certain of the ideas and achievements of the French Revolution outside the borders of France and throughout Europe.

PROBLEM OF THE "COLLECTIVE MAN" OR OF "SOCIAL CONFORMISM"<sup>42</sup>

Educative and formative role of the State. Its aim is always that of creating new and higher types of civilisation; of adapting the "civilisation" and the morality of the broadest popular masses to the necessities of the continuous development of the economic apparatus of production; hence of evolving even physically new types of humanity. But how will each single individual succeed in incorporating himself into the collective man, and how will educative pressure be applied to single individuals so as to obtain their consent and their collaboration, turning necessity and coercion into "freedom"? Question of the "Law": this concept will have to be extended to include those activities which are at present classified as "legally neutral", and which belong to the domain of civil society; the latter operates without "sanctions" or compulsory "obligations", but nevertheless exerts a collective pressure and obtains objective results in the form of an evolution of customs, ways of thinking and acting, morality, etc.

Political concept of the so-called "Permanent Revolution", which emerged before 1848 as a scientifically evolved expression of the

<sup>42</sup> See too NM, pp. 150-51: "Tendency to conformism in the contemporary world, more widespread and deeper than in the past: the standardisation of thought and action assumes national or even continental proportions. The economic basis of the 'collective man': big factories, Taylorisation, rationalisation, etc. . . . On social 'conformism', it should be stressed that the problem is not a new one, and that the alarm expressed by certain intellectuals is merely comic. Conformism has always existed: what is involved today is a struggle between 'two conformisms', i.e. a struggle for hegemony, a crisis of civil society. The old intellectual and moral leaders of society feel the ground slipping from under their feet; they perceive that their 'sermons' have become precisely mere 'sermons', i.e. external to reality, pure form without any content, shades without a spirit. This is the reason for their reactionary and conservative tendencies; for the particular form of civilisation, culture and morality which they represented is decomposing, and they loudly proclaim the death of all civilisation, all culture, all morality; they call for repressive measures by the State, and constitute resistance groups cut off from the real historical process, thus prolonging the crisis, since the eclipse of a way of living and thinking cannot take place without a crisis. The representatives of the new order in gestation, on the other hand, inspired by 'rationalistic' hatred for the old, propagate utopias and fanciful schemes. What is the point of reference for the new world in gestation? The world of production; work. The greatest utilitarianism must go to found any analysis of the moral and intellectual institutions to be created and of the principles to be propagated. Collective and individual life must be organised with a view to the maximum yield of the productive apparatus. The development of economic forces on new bases and the progressive installation of the new structure will heal the contradictions which cannot fail to exist, and, when they have created a new 'conformism' from below, will permit new possibilities for self-discipline, i.e. for freedom, including that of the individual."

Jacobin experience from 1789 to Thermidor.<sup>43</sup> The formula belongs to an historical period in which the great mass political parties and the great economic trade unions did not yet exist, and society was still, so to speak, in a state of fluidity from many points of view: greater backwardness of the countryside, and almost complete monopoly of political and State power by a few cities or even by a single one (Paris in the case of France); a relatively rudimentary State apparatus, and greater autonomy of civil society from State activity; a specific system of military forces and of national armed services; greater autonomy of the national economies from the economic relations of the world market, etc. In the period after 1870, with the colonial expansion of Europe, all these elements change: the internal and international organisational relations of the State become more complex and massive, and the Forty-Eightist formula of the "Permanent Revolution" is expanded and transcended in political science by the formula of "civil hegemony". The same thing happens in the art of politics as happens in military art: war of movement increasingly becomes war of position, and it can be said that a State will win a war in so far as it prepares for it minutely and technically in peacetime. The massive structures of the modern democracies, both as State organisations, and as complexes of associations in civil society, constitute for the art of politics as it were the "trenches" and the permanent fortifications of the front in the war of position: they render merely "partial" the element of movement which before used to be "the whole" of war, etc.

This question is posed for the modern States, but not for backward countries or for colonies, where forms which elsewhere have been superseded and have become anachronistic are still in vigour. The question of the value of ideologies must also be studied in a treatise of political science. [1933-34]

SOCIOLOGY AND POLITICAL SCIENCE

The rise of sociology is related to the decline of the concept of political science and the art of politics which took place in the nineteenth century (to be more accurate, in the second half of that century, with the success of evolutionary and positivist theories). Everything that is of real importance in sociology is nothing other than political science. "Politics" became synonymous with parlia-

<sup>43</sup> See note 49 on p. 80.

mentary politics or the politics of personal cliques. Conviction that the constitutions and parliaments had initiated an epoch of "natural" "evolution", that society had discovered its definitive, because rational, foundations, etc. And, lo and behold, society can now be studied with the methods of the natural sciences! Impoverishment of the concept of the State which ensued from such views. If political science means science of the State, and the State is the entire complex of practical and theoretical activities with which the ruling class not only justifies and maintains its dominance, but manages to win the active consent of those over whom it rules, then it is obvious that all the essential questions of sociology are nothing other than the questions of political science. If there is a residue, this can only be made up of false problems, i.e. frivolous problems. The question therefore which faced Bukharin when he wrote his *Popular Manual*<sup>44</sup> was that of determining what status could be accorded to political science in relation to the philosophy of praxis: whether the two are identical (something impossible to maintain, except from the most crudely positivist viewpoint); or whether political science is the body of empirical or practical principles which are deduced from a vaster conception of the world or philosophy properly speaking; or whether this philosophy is only the science of the concepts or general categories created by political science, etc.

If it is true that man cannot be conceived of except as historically determined man—i.e. man who has developed, and who lives, in certain conditions, in a particular social complex or totality of social relations—is it then possible to take sociology as meaning simply the study of these conditions and the laws which regulate their development? Since the will and initiative of men themselves cannot be left out of account, this notion must be false. The problem of what "science" itself is has to be posed. Is not science itself "political activity" and political thought, in as much as it transforms men, and makes them different from what they were before? If everything is "politics", then it is necessary—in order to avoid lapsing into a wearisome and tautological catalogue of platitudes—to distinguish by means of new concepts between on the one hand the politics which corresponds to that science which is traditionally called "philosophy", and on the other the politics which is called political science in the strict sense. If science is the "discovery" of formerly unknown reality, is this reality not conceived

of in a certain sense as transcendent? And is it not thought that there still exists something "unknown" and hence transcendent? And does the concept of science as "creation" not then mean that it too is "politics"? Everything depends on seeing whether the creation involved is "arbitrary", or whether it is rational—i.e. "useful" to men in that it enlarges their concept of life, and raises to a higher level (develops) life itself.\*

#### HEGEMONY (CIVIL SOCIETY) AND SEPARATION OF POWERS

The separation of powers,<sup>45</sup> together with all the discussion provoked by its realisation and the legal dogmas which its appearance brought into being, is a product of the struggle between civil society and political society in a specific historical period. This period is characterised by a certain unstable equilibrium between the classes, which is a result of the fact that certain categories of intellectuals (in the direct service of the State, especially the civil and military bureaucracy) are still too closely tied to the old dominant classes. In other words, there takes place within the society what Croce calls the "perpetual conflict between Church and State", in which the Church is taken as representing the totality of civil society (whereas in fact it is only an element of diminishing importance within it), and the State as representing every attempt to crystallise permanently a particular stage of development, a particular situation. In this sense, the Church itself may become State, and the conflict may occur between on the one hand secular (and secularising) civil society, and on the other State/Church (when the Church has become an integral part of the State, of political society monopolised by a specific privileged group, which absorbs the Church in order the better to preserve its monopoly with the support of that zone of "civil society" which the Church represents).

Essential importance of the separation of powers for political and economic liberalism; the entire liberal ideology, with its strengths

\* In connection with the *Popular Manual* and its appendix *Theory and Practice*, the philosophical review by Armando Carlini (*Nuova Antologia*, 16 March 1933) should be consulted; it appears from this that the equation "Theory: practice = pure mathematics: applied mathematics" was formulated by an Englishman (Wittaker, I think).<sup>45</sup>

<sup>44</sup> Sir Edmund Whittaker (1873–1956), physicist and mathematician.

<sup>45</sup> The doctrine developed by Montesquieu in his *Esprit des Lois*—on the basis of the contemporary bourgeois political system in England as he saw it—whereby executive, legislative and judiciary functions are exercised independently of each other. The principle inspired the American Constitution and others modelled on it.

<sup>44</sup> See note 63 on p. 419.

and its weaknesses, can be encapsulated in the principle of the separation of powers, and the source of liberalism's weakness then becomes apparent: it is the bureaucracy—i.e. the crystallisation of the leading personnel—which exercises coercive power, and at a certain point it becomes a caste. Hence the popular demand for making all posts elective—a demand which is extreme liberalism, and at the same time its dissolution (principle of the permanent Constituent Assembly, etc.; in Republics, the election at fixed intervals of the Head of State gives the illusion of satisfying this elementary popular demand).

Unity of the State in the differentiation of powers: Parliament more closely linked to civil society; the judiciary power, between government and Parliament, represents the continuity of the written law (even against the government). Naturally all three powers are also organs of political hegemony, but in different degrees: 1. Legislature; 2, Judiciary; 3. Executive. It is to be noted how lapses in the administration of justice make an especially disastrous impression on the public: the hegemonic apparatus is more sensitive in this sector, to which arbitrary actions on the part of the police and political administration may also be referred. [1930-32]

#### THE CONCEPTION OF LAW

A conception of the Law which must be an essentially innovatory one is not to be found, integrally, in any pre-existing doctrine (not even in the doctrine of the so-called positive school, and notably that of Ferri).<sup>47</sup> If every State tends to create and maintain a certain type of civilisation and of citizen (and hence of collective life and of individual relations), and to eliminate certain customs and attitudes and to disseminate others, then the Law will be its instrument for this purpose (together with the school system, and other institutions and activities). It must be developed so that it is suitable for such a purpose—so that it is maximally effective and productive of positive results.

The conception of law will have to be freed from every residue of transcendentalism and from every absolute; in practice, from every moralistic fanaticism. However, it seems to me that one cannot

<sup>47</sup> Enrico Ferri (1856-1929), penologist and politician, began his political career as a socialist (editor of *Avanti!* 1900-1905), but rallied to fascism in 1922. He was the most prominent member of the so-called positive school of penology, and the founder of Italian criminology. The main idea behind his penal theories was the rejection of any idea of moral retribution in the punishment of crimes, in favour of the notion of punishment as a deterrent.

start from the point of view that the State does not "punish" (if this term is reduced to its human significance), but only struggles against social "dangerousness". In reality, the State must be conceived of as an "educator", in as much as it tends precisely to create a new type or level of civilisation. Because one is acting essentially on economic forces, reorganising and developing the apparatus of economic production, creating a new structure, the conclusion must not be drawn that superstructural factors should be left to themselves, to develop spontaneously, to a haphazard and sporadic germination. The State, in this field, too, is an instrument of "rationalisation", of acceleration and of Taylorisation.<sup>48</sup> It operates according to a plan, urges, incites, solicits, and "punishes"; for, once the conditions are created in which a certain way of life is "possible", then "criminal action or omission" must have a punitive sanction, with moral implications, and not merely be judged generically as "dangerous". The Law is the repressive and negative aspect of the entire positive, civilising activity undertaken by the State. The "prize-giving"<sup>49</sup> activities of individuals and groups, etc., must also be incorporated in the conception of the Law; praiseworthy and meritorious activity is rewarded, just as criminal actions are punished (and punished in original ways, bringing in "public opinion" as a form of sanction).

[1933-34: 1st version 1931-32.]

#### POLITICS AND CONSTITUTIONAL LAW

In *Nuova Antologia*, 16 December 1929, there is published a brief note by a certain M. Azzalini, *La politica, scienza ed arte di Stato*, which may be of interest as a presentation of the elements among which scientific schematism flounders.

Azzalini begins by affirming that it was a "dazzling" glory on Machiavelli's part "to have circumscribed the ambit of politics within the State". What Azzalini means is not easy to grasp: he quotes from Chapter III of *The Prince* the passage: "When the Cardinal of Rouen said to me that the Italians understood nothing of war, I replied that the French understood nothing of the State", and on this single quotation he bases his assertion that "hence" for Machiavelli "politics must be understood as a science, and as the science of the State, and that was his glory, etc." (the term

<sup>48</sup> See "Americanism and Fordism" on pp. 301-8.

<sup>49</sup> "premiatrici".

"science of the State" for "politics" was it seems used, in the correct modern sense, only by Marsilio of Padua<sup>50</sup> before Machiavelli). Azzalini is fairly lightweight and superficial. The anecdote of the Cardinal of Rouen, torn from its context, means nothing. In its context it takes on a meaning which does not lend itself to scientific deductions: it was clearly just a witty epigram, a spontaneous retort. The Cardinal of Rouen had asserted that the Italians understood nothing of war; in retaliation, Machiavelli replies that the French understand nothing of the State, because otherwise they would not have allowed the Pope to extend his power in Italy, against the interests of the French State. Machiavelli was in fact very far from thinking that the French understood nothing of the State; on the contrary he admired the manner in which the monarchy (Louis XI) had welded France into a unitary State, and he used the actions of the French State as a term of comparison for Italy. This conversation of his with the Cardinal of Rouen is "political action" and not "political science"; for, according to him, if it was damaging to French "foreign policy" that the Pope should grow stronger, it was even more damaging to the domestic affairs of Italy.

The strange thing is that, taking this incongruous quotation as his cue, Azzalini goes on to say that "despite the assertion that this science studies the State, a totally imprecise (!) definition (!?) is given of it—since there is no indication of the criterion with which the object of the enquiry is to be examined. And the imprecision is absolute, in view of the fact that all the legal sciences in general, and constitutional law in particular, refer indirectly and directly to the State."

What does all this mean, applied to Machiavelli? Less than nothing: mental confusion. Machiavelli wrote books of "immediate political action", and not utopias—which express the longing for a ready-made State, with all its functions and elements ready-made too. In his treatment, in his critique of the present, he expressed general concepts—presented, however, in aphoristic rather than in systematic form—and an original conception of the world. This conception of the world too could be called "philosophy of praxis", or "neo-humanism", in as much as it does not recognise transcendent or immanent (in the metaphysical sense) elements, but

bases itself entirely on the concrete action of man, who, impelled by historical necessity, works and transforms reality. It is not true, as Azzalini seems to believe, that in Machiavelli no account is taken of "constitutional law", since general principles of constitutional law can be found scattered throughout Machiavelli's work. Indeed he quite clearly asserts the necessity for the State to be ruled by law, by fixed principles, which virtuous citizens can follow in the certainty of not being destroyed by the blows of blind fate. But what Machiavelli does do is to bring everything back to politics—i.e. to the art of governing men, of securing their permanent consent, and hence of founding "great States". (It must be remembered that, in Machiavelli's opinion, neither the Commune, nor the Republic, nor the communal *Signoria*<sup>51</sup> was a State, since they lacked not only a sizeable territory but also a population capable of supporting the military force required for an autonomous international policy. In his opinion, there was still a situation of non-State in Italy, with the Papacy, and this would last until religion too became a "policy" of the State, and ceased to be the Pope's policy for preventing the formation of strong States in Italy—a policy which involved intervention in the internal affairs of peoples not under his temporal domination, in the pursuit of interests which were not those of the States in question, and which hence were troublesome and disruptive.)

One could find in Machiavelli the confirmation of what I have noted elsewhere: that the Italian mediaeval bourgeoisie could not pass from the corporate to the political phase, because it was unable to free itself completely from the mediaeval cosmopolitan conception represented by the Pope, the clergy and also by the lay intellectuals (humanists)—in other words, it was unable to create an autonomous State, but remained within the mediaeval framework, feudal and cosmopolitan.

Azzalini writes that "Ulpian's<sup>52</sup> definition on its own, or better still the examples he gives in his *Digest*, are sufficient to reveal the extrinsic identity (and so what?) of the object of the two sciences. '*Ius publicum ad statum rei (publicae) romanae spectat.*—*Publicum ius, in*

<sup>51</sup> The "*Signoria*" or council of notables became the effective power in the Italian city states in the fourteenth century, replacing the "communal" democracy of their earlier development and representing a transitional phase before the emergence, in most cases, of a single dominant family dynasty. Such dynasties were legitimised in the fifteenth century by Pope or Emperor, as the *Principato* or Princely régime.

<sup>52</sup> Ulpian was a Roman jurist, who died in A.D. 228.

<sup>50</sup> Marsilio of Padua (1275–1342), author of *Defensor Pacis*. He ascribed the continual wars in northern Italy to the temporal claims of the Papacy, and said that the Church ought to be subordinated to the State. He stood for a general restriction of Church powers, and influenced Reformation thinkers like Luther.

*sacris, in sacerdotibus, in magistratibus consistit*!<sup>68</sup> Hence there is an identity of object in constitutional law and in political science, but not a substantive one; for the criteria with which the two sciences treat the same material are totally different. In fact, the spheres of the juridical order and the political order are different. And, in reality, while the first observes the public organism from a static perspective, as the natural product of a particular historical evolution, the second observes that same organism from a dynamic perspective, as a product whose virtues and whose defects can be evaluated, and which consequently must be modified in the light of new requirements and later developments." Hence one might say that "the juridical order is ontological and analytical, since it studies and analyses the various public institutions in their real essence", while "the political order is deontological and critical, since it studies the various institutions not as they are, but as they ought to be, that is to say with evaluative criteria and considerations of expediency which are not, and cannot be, juridical".

And this wisacre considers himself an admirer of Machiavelli, a disciple—indeed he even thinks that he has perfected Machiavelli's thought!

"It follows from this that, despite the formal identity described above, there exists a substantive diversity so profound and striking that it perhaps invalidates the opinion pronounced by one of the greatest contemporary publicists, that it is difficult if not impossible to create a political science entirely distinct from constitutional law. It seems to us that that opinion is true only if the analysis of the juridical and political aspects stops there—but not if it goes further, defining that further area which belongs to the exclusive competence of political science. The latter, in fact, does not confine itself to studying the organisation of the State with a criterion which is deontological and critical, and therefore different from that used by constitutional law for the same object; instead it extends its sphere to a field which is proper to it, investigating the laws which regulate the rise, evolution and decline of States. Nor can it be asserted that such a study belongs to history (!) understood in a general sense (!). For—even if it is admitted that the search for causes, effects, and the mutual bonds of interdependence of the natural laws governing the nature and the evolution of States, constitutes an historical enquiry—the search for appropriate means to control in practice the overall political strategy will always

<sup>68</sup> "Public law concerns the state of the Roman republic. Public law consists in rites, priests, and magistrates."

remain of exclusively political competence, not historical and hence not juridical. The function which Machiavelli promised once more to carry out, and synthesised, when he said: 'I will argue how these principdoms can be ruled and held', is such, both by the intrinsic importance of the problem and by definition, that it not only legitimises the autonomy of politics, but it also allows, at least from the point of view last outlined, even a formal distinction between itself and constitutional law." And that is what is meant by *autonomy* of politics!

But—says Azzalini—there exists an art as well as a science of politics. "There exist men who draw, or drew, from personal intuition their vision of the needs and interests of the country they govern; who, in their governmental activity, realised that vision of personal intuition in the external world. By this we certainly do not mean that intuitive, and hence artistic, activity is the only, or the predominant, activity of the Statesman; we only mean that, side by side with practical, economic and moral activities, he must also preserve the above-mentioned theoretical activity (whether in the subjective form of intuition, or the objective (!) form of expression); and that if such requisites are missing, the politician cannot exist, and even less (!) can the statesman—whose eminence is characterised precisely by this faculty, which cannot be learnt (?). Thus in the political field, too, in addition to the man of science in whom cognitive theoretical activity predominates, there subsists the artist, in whom intuitive theoretical activity predominates. Nor does that entirely exhaust the sphere of action of the art of politics; for this may be seen not only in terms of the statesman who, through the practical functions of government, externalises the vision that intuition creates internally, but can also be evaluated in terms of the writer who realises in the external world (!) the political truth which he intuitively realises it not through political action, but through works and writings which translate the author's intuition. This is the case with the Indian Kamandaka (third century A.D.), with Petrarch in the *Trattarello dei Carraresi*, with Botero in the *Ragion di Stato*, and, from certain points of view, with Machiavelli and Mazzini."

This all really is a fine hotch-potch—worthy not so much of Machiavelli as, more than anything else, of Tittoni, editor of *Nuova Antologia*. Azzalini is incapable of finding his way about either in philosophy or in political science. But I wanted to take all these notes, in order to try to disentangle his plot, and see if I could arrive at clear concepts for my own sake.

For instance, it is necessary to disembroil what "intuition" might mean in politics, and also the expression "art" of politics, etc. Certain points from Bergson should be recalled at this juncture: "Of life (reality in movement), intelligence offers us only a translation in terms of inertia. It circles around, taking the greatest possible number of external views of the object, which, instead of penetrating, it draws towards itself. But it is intuition which will lead us into the very interior of life: by that I mean instinct which has become disinterested." "Our eye perceives the traits of the living being, but juxtaposed to each other rather than organically related. The purpose of life, the simple movement which runs through the lineaments, which links them together and gives them a meaning, escapes it; and it is this purpose that the artist tends to capture, situating himself within the object by a kind of sympathy, breaking down by an effort of intuition the barrier which space places between him and his model. However, it is true that aesthetic intuition only captures that which is individual." "Intelligence is characterised by a natural incomprehensibility of life, since it represents clearly only the discontinuous and the immobile."<sup>44</sup>

Divergence, in the meantime, between political intuition and aesthetic, lyric or artistic intuition; only by metaphor does one speak of the art of politics. Political intuition is not expressed through the artist, but through the "leader"; and "intuition" must be understood to mean not "knowledge of men", but swiftness in connecting seemingly disparate facts, and in conceiving the means adequate to particular ends—thus discovering the interests involved, and arousing the passions of men and directing them towards a particular action. The "expression" of the "leader" is his "action" (in a positive or a negative sense, of launching or preventing a particular action, which is consistent or inconsistent with the end which one wishes to attain). However, the "leader" in politics may be an individual, but also be a more or less numerous political body: in the latter case, unity of purpose will be achieved by an individual (or by a small inner group, and within that small group by an individual) who may change from time to time even though the group remains united and consistent in its on-going activity.

If one had to translate the notion "Prince", as used in Machiavelli's work, into modern political language, one would have to make a series of distinctions: the "Prince" could be a Head

of State, or the leader of a government, but it could also be a political leader whose aim is to conquer a State, or to found a new type of State; in this sense, "Prince" could be translated in modern terms as "political party". In certain States, the "Head of State"—in other words, the element which balances the various interests struggling against the predominant (but not absolutely exclusivistic) interest—is precisely the "political party". With the difference, however, that in terms of traditional, constitutional law it juridically neither rules nor governs. It has "*de facto* power", and exercises the hegemonic function and hence that of holding the balance between the various interests in "civil society"; the latter, however, is in fact intertwined with political society to such an extent that all the citizens feel that the party on the contrary both rules and governs. It is not possible to create a constitutional law of the traditional type on the basis of this reality, which is in continuous movement; it is only possible to create a system of principles asserting that the State's goal is its own end, its own disappearance, in other words the re-absorption of political society into civil society. [1930]

#### PARLIAMENT AND THE STATE<sup>45</sup>

Professor Julius Miskolczy, the director of the Hungarian Academy in Rome, has written in *Magyar Szemle* that in Italy "Parliament, which used formerly to be so to speak outside the State, has now, despite the valuable contribution which it continues to make, become inserted in the State and has undergone a basic change in its composition . . ."

The notion that Parliament may have become "inserted" into the State is a discovery in the science and art of politics that is worthy of the Christopher Columbus of contemporary Reaction. All the same, the assertion is interesting as evidence of the way in which many politicians conceive the State in practice. For the question does indeed have to be asked: do parliaments, even in those countries where apparently they have most real power, in fact constitute a part of the State structure? In other words, what is their real function? Furthermore, if the answer is affirmative, in what way do they constitute a part of the State, and how do they carry out their particular function? On the other hand, even if parliaments do not constitute an organic part of the State, is their

<sup>44</sup> Henri Bergson, *Creative Evolution*, London, 1954, *passim*.

<sup>45</sup> This title has been added by the editors—Gramsci's note originally had no title.



existence of no significance for the State? And what grounds are there for the accusations made against parliamentarianism and against the party system—which is inseparable from parliamentarianism? (Objective grounds, naturally—i.e. ones related to the fact that the existence of Parliament, in itself, hinders and delays the *technical* actions of the government.)

That the representative system may politically “be a nuisance” for the career bureaucracy is understandable; but this is not the point. The point is to establish whether the representative and party system, instead of being a suitable mechanism for choosing elected functionaries to integrate and balance the appointed civil servants and prevent them from becoming ossified, has become a hindrance and a mechanism which operates in the reverse direction—and, if so, for what reasons. Moreover, even an affirmative reply to these questions does not exhaust the problem. For even allowing (as it must be allowed) that parliamentarianism has become inefficient and even harmful, it is not necessary to conclude that the bureaucratic system must be rehabilitated and praised. It has to be considered whether parliamentarianism and representative system are synonymous, and whether a different solution is not possible—both for parliamentarianism and for the bureaucratic system—with a new type of representative system. [1933]

#### SELF-CRITICISM AND THE HYPOCRISY OF SELF-CRITICISM

It is clear that self-criticism has become a fashionable word.<sup>56</sup> The stated claim is that an equivalent has been found to the criticism represented by the “free” political struggle of a representative

<sup>56</sup> We have been unable to track down any example of the use of this word in fascist Italy, but it seems clear that it must have been used, in arguments destined to counter the charge that opposition parties were necessary to ensure criticism—and hence efficiency. Precisely this kind of argument occurs in one of Mussolini's speeches on 26 May 1927: “Here the problem arises: but how do you manage to do without an opposition? . . . Opposition is not necessary to the functioning of a healthy political régime. Opposition is stupid, superfluous in a totalitarian régime like the Fascist régime. Opposition is useful in easy times, academic times, as was the case before the war, when there were discussions in the Assembly about if, how and when socialism would be achieved, and indeed a whole debate about this—though this was clearly not serious, despite the men who took part in it. But we have the opposition within ourselves, dear sirs, we are not old nags who need a touch of the spur. We keep a strict check on ourselves . . .”

The term “self-criticism” was of course already current in the communist movement, and especially in the Soviet Union, by the late twenties. Tasca was expelled from the PCI for refusing to criticise himself for his positions in 1927–28; the Italian delegates to the Tenth Plenum in July 1929 had to criticise their party's 1927–28 policies, and also the “softness” shown towards Tasca by the

system—an equivalent which, in fact, if it is seriously applied, is more effective and fruitful than the original. But this is the nub of the matter: that the surrogate should be applied seriously, that the self-criticism should be operative and “pitiless”—since its effectiveness lies precisely in its being pitiless. In reality it has turned out that self-criticism offers an opportunity for fine speeches and pointless declarations, and for nothing else; self-criticism has been “parliamentarised”. For it has not yet been remarked that it is not so easy to destroy parliamentarism as it seems. “Implicit” and “tacit” parliamentarism is far more dangerous than the explicit variety, since it has all its defects without its positive values. There often exists a “tacit” party system, i.e. a “tacit” and “implicit” parliamentarism where one would least think it. It is obvious that it is impossible to abolish a “pure” form, such as parliamentarism, without radically abolishing its content, individualism, and this in its precise meaning of “individual appropriation” of profit and of economic initiative for capitalist and individual profit. Hypocritical self-criticism is precisely a feature of such situation. Beside statistics give an index of the real position. Unless it is claimed that criminality has disappeared—which in any case other statistics disprove (and how!).

The entire subject needs re-examining, especially with respect to the “implicit” party system and parliamentarism, i.e. that which functions like “black markets” and “illegal lotteries” where and when the official market and the State lottery are for some reason kept closed. Theoretically the important thing is to show that between the old defeated absolutism of the constitutional régimes and the new absolutism there is an essential difference, which means that it is not possible to speak of a regression; not only this, but also to show that such “black parliamentarism” is a function of present historical necessities, is “a progress” in its way, that the return to traditional “parliamentarism” would be an anti-historical regression, since even where this “functions” publicly, the effective parliamentarism is the “black” one. Theoretically it seems to me that one can explain the phenomenon with the concept of “hegemony”, with a return to “corporativism”—not in the *ancien régime* sense, but in the modern sense of the word, in which the

party leadership; the “three” began their opposition during the same year by calling for “serious self-criticism” (notably by Togliatti and Grieco) for the 1927–28 line. However, it seems difficult to interpret this note of Gramsci's as a reference to the communist usage of the term, and at all events it is clear that what follows refers to fascism in Italy.

"corporation" cannot have closed and exclusivistic limits as was the case in the past. (Today it is corporativism of "social function", without hereditary or any other restriction—which was anyway only relative in the past too, when its most obvious feature was that of "legal privilege"). In discussing this subject, care must be taken to exclude the slightest appearance of support for the "absolutist" tendency, and that can be achieved by insisting on the "transitory" character of the phenomenon (in the sense that it does not constitute an epoch, not in the sense of its "short duration").<sup>57</sup> (With respect to this, it should be noted that the fact of "not constituting an epoch" is too often confused with brief "temporal" duration: it is possible to "last" a long time, relatively, and yet not "constitute an epoch": the viscous forces of certain régimes are often unsuspected, especially if they are "strong" as a result of the weakness of others (including where this has been procured): with respect to this, the opinions of Cesarino Rossi<sup>58</sup> should be recalled; these were certainly mistaken "in the last resort", but they really did contain a certain effective realism). "Black" parliamentarism appears to be a theme which should be developed quite extensively; it also offers an opportunity to define the political concepts which constitute the "parliamentary" conception. (Comparisons with other countries, in this respect, are interesting: for example, is not the liquidation of Leone Davidovi [Trotsky] an episode of the liquidation "also" of the "black" parliamentarism which existed after the abolition of the "legal" parliament?) Real fact and legal fact. System of forces in unstable equilibrium which find on the parliamentary terrain the "legal" terrain of their "more economic" equilibrium; and abolition of this legal terrain, because it becomes a source of organisation and of reawakening of latent and slumbering social forces. Hence this abolition is a symptom (and prediction) of intensifications of struggles and not vice versa. When a struggle

<sup>57</sup> See note 15 on p. 223. The Italian "*far epoca*" has no exact English translation (although the English "epoch-making" does exist, with a rather different meaning).

<sup>58</sup> Cesare Rossi (b. 1887) was one of Mussolini's closest lieutenants in the early days of the fascist movement, and in charge of his Press bureau until the Matteotti murder of 1924. He was made the scapegoat for this, and broke with Mussolini and fascism in consequence. He wrote a famous "Memorandum" on Mussolini's involvement in a number of the most notorious fascist outrages of the period 1920-24, and gave this to the opposition parties; it was published by the liberal Amendola in *Il Mondo* in 1925. It is difficult to be sure which "opinions" Gramsci is referring to here, but they might perhaps be the idea expressed in his "Memorandum" that "the general atmosphere of illegality and cowardice" was "created by the weakness of the Fascist régime".

can be resolved legally, it is certainly not dangerous; it becomes so precisely when the legal equilibrium is recognised to be impossible. (Which does not mean that by abolishing the barometer one can abolish bad weather.) [1933]

#### THE STATE

In the new "juridical" tendencies represented by the *Nuovi Studi* of Volpicelli and Spirito, the confusion between the concept of class-State and the concept of regulated society<sup>59</sup> should be noted, as a critical point of departure. This confusion is especially noteworthy in the paper on *Economic Freedom* presented by Spirito at the Nineteenth Congress of the Society for Scientific Progress held at Bolzano in September 1930, and published in *Nuovi Studi* in the 1930 September-October issue.

As long as the class-State exists the regulated society cannot exist, other than metaphorically—i.e. only in the sense that the class-State too is a regulated society. The utopians, in as much as they expressed a critique of the society that existed in their day, very well understood that the class-State could not be the regulated society. So much is this true that in the types of society which the various utopias represented, economic equality was introduced as

<sup>59</sup> Spirito and Volpicelli were the principal theorists of the "corporate economy" in fascist Italy. They claimed that corporativism represented a "post-capitalist" economy, and that it had abolished the anarchy of liberal capitalism. Gramsci here refers to the confusion involved in the idea that a "regulated" society could co-exist with capitalism—the class-State. Elsewhere Gramsci uses "regulated society" to mean Communism (see "Statement of the Problem" in "Some Problems in the Study of the Philosophy of Praxis", on pp. 381-2 below). The concept is probably a reference to the concluding passage of "*Socialism: Utopian and Scientific*" where Engels discusses the withering away of the State. He writes: "With the seizing of the means of production by society, production of commodities is done away with, and, simultaneously, the mastery of the product over the producer. Anarchy in social production is replaced by *systematic, definite organisation*" (our italics). Spirito and Volpicelli claimed that the corporate economy had achieved order and harmony. Gramsci comments, in effect, that this will only be possible under Communism; until then, there will continue to be a class-State, and hence no "regulated" society. See too the discussion of Spirito's theories on PP. pp. 79-82, especially: "Fundamental question: the utopia of Spirito and Volpicelli consists in confusing the State with the regulated society, a confusion which occurs by way of a purely 'rationalistic' concatenation of concepts: individual = society (the individual is not an 'atom' but the historical individuation of the entire society), society = State, hence individual = State. The feature which differentiates this 'utopia' from the traditional utopias and from attempts in general to find the 'best possible State' is the fact that Spirito and Volpicelli claim that this 'fantastic' entity of theirs already exists . . . For political reasons the masses have been told: 'What you were awaiting, and what was promised you by charlatans (i.e. the socialists and communists) already exists', i.e. the regulated society, economic equality, etc."

a necessary basis for the projected reform. Clearly in this the utopians were not utopians, but concrete political scientists and consistent critics. The utopian character of some of them was due to the fact that they believed that economic equality could be introduced by arbitrary laws, by an act of will, etc. But the idea that complete and perfect political equality cannot exist without economic equality (an idea to be found in other political writers, too, even right-wing ones—i.e. among the critics of democracy, in so far as the latter makes use of the Swiss or Danish model to claim that the system is a reasonable one for all countries) nevertheless remains correct. This idea can be found in the writers of the seventeenth century too, for example in Ludovico Zuccolo and in his book *Il Belluzzi*, and I think in Machiavelli as well. Maurras believes that in Switzerland that particular form of democracy is possible precisely because there is a certain common averageness of economic fortunes, etc.

The confusion of class-State and regulated society is peculiar to the middle classes and petty intellectuals, who would be glad of any regularisation that would prevent sharp struggles and upheavals. It is a typically reactionary and regressive conception. [1930-32]

In my opinion, the most reasonable and concrete thing that can be said about the ethical State,<sup>60</sup> the cultural State, is this: every State is ethical in as much as one of its most important functions is to raise the great mass of the population to a particular cultural and moral level, a level (or type) which corresponds to the needs of the productive forces for development, and hence to the interests of the ruling classes. The school as a positive educative function, and the courts as a repressive and negative educative function, are the most important State activities in this sense: but, in reality, a multitude of other so-called private initiatives and activities tend to the same end—initiatives and activities which form the apparatus of the political and cultural hegemony of the ruling classes. Hegel's conception belongs to a period in which the spreading development of the bourgeoisie could seem limitless,

<sup>60</sup> The idea of the "ethical" State is associated with Croce. For the latter, the two moments of the State were the "ethical" and the "political" (or the "moral" and the "useful"); he saw these as being in perpetual dialectical contradiction—a conflict which he represented symbolically as that between Church and State. The term was also adopted by fascism, see e.g. Mussolini, in *The Doctrine of Fascism*, 1932: "The fascist State has its own consciousness, its own will, and for that reason is called an 'ethical' State. In 1929 . . . I said 'For fascism the State is not the night-watchman . . . it is a spiritual and moral fact . . . it educates the citizens to civil virtue . . .'" etc.

so that its ethicity or universality could be asserted: all mankind will be bourgeois. But, in reality, only the social group that poses the end of the State and its own end as the target to be achieved can create an ethical State—i.e. one which tends to put an end to the internal divisions of the ruled, etc., and to create a technically and morally unitary social organism. [1931-32]

Hegel's doctrine of parties and associations as the "private" woof of the State. This derived historically from the political experiences of the French Revolution, and was to serve to give a more concrete character to constitutionalism. Government with the consent of the governed—but with this consent organised, and not generic and vague as it is expressed in the instant of elections. The State does have and request consent, but it also "educates" this consent, by means of the political and syndical associations; these, however, are private organisms, left to the private initiative of the ruling class. Hegel, in a certain sense, thus already transcended pure constitutionalism and theorised the parliamentary State with its party system. But his conception of association could not help still being vague and primitive, halfway between the political and the economic; it was in accordance with the historical experience of the time, which was very limited and offered only one perfected example of organisation—the "corporative" (a politics grafted directly on to the economy). Marx was not able to have historical experiences superior (or at least much superior) to those of Hegel; but, as a result of his journalistic and agitational activities, he had a sense for the masses. Marx's concept of organisation remains entangled amid the following elements: craft organisation; Jacobin clubs; secret conspiracies by small groups; journalistic organisation.

The French Revolution offered two prevalent types. There were the "clubs"—loose organisations of the "popular assembly" type, centralised around individual political figures. Each had its newspaper, by means of which it kept alive the attention and interest of a particular clientèle that had no fixed boundaries. This clientèle then upheld the theses of the paper in the club's meetings. Certainly, among those who frequented the clubs, there must have existed tight, select groupings of people who knew each other, who met separately and prepared the climate of the meetings, in order to support one tendency or another—depending on the circumstances and also on the concrete interests in play.

The secret conspiracies, which subsequently spread so widely in Italy prior to 1848, must have developed in France after Thermidor among the second-rank followers of Jacobinism: with great difficulty

in the Napoleonic period on account of the vigilant control of the police; with greater facility from 1815 to 1830 under the Restoration, which was fairly liberal at the base and was free from certain preoccupations. In this period, from 1815 to 1830, the differentiation of the popular political camp was to occur. This already seemed considerable during the "glorious days" of 1830,<sup>61</sup> when the formations which had been crystallising during the preceding fifteen years now came to the surface. After 1830 and up to 1848, this process of differentiation became perfected, and produced some quite highly-developed specimens in Blanqui and Filippo Buonarroti.

It is unlikely that Hegel could have had first-hand knowledge of these historical experiences, which are, however, more vivid in Marx.\*

The revolution which the bourgeois class has brought into the conception of law, and hence into the function of the State, consists especially in the will to conform (hence ethnicity of the law and of the State). The previous ruling classes were essentially conservative in the sense that they did not tend to construct an organic passage from the other classes into their own, i.e. to enlarge their class sphere "technically" and ideologically: their conception was that of a closed caste. The bourgeois class poses itself as an organism in continuous movement, capable of absorbing the entire society, assimilating it to its own cultural and economic level. The entire function of the State has been transformed; the State has become an "educator", etc.

How this process comes to a halt, and the conception of the State as pure force is returned to, etc. The bourgeois class is "saturated": it not only does not expand—it starts to disintegrate; it not only does not assimilate new elements, it loses part of itself (or at least its losses are enormously more numerous than its assimilations). A class claiming to be capable of assimilating the whole of society, and which was at the same time really able to express such a process, would perfect this conception of the State and of law, so as to conceive the end of the State and of law—rendered useless since they will have exhausted their function and will have been absorbed by civil society. [1931-32]

That the everyday concept of State is unilateral and leads to

grotesque errors can be demonstrated with reference to Daniël Halévy's recent book *Décadence de la liberté*, of which I have read a review in *Nouvelles Littéraires*. For Halévy, "State" is the representative apparatus; and he discovers that the most important events of French history from 1870 until the present day have not been due to initiatives by political organisms deriving from universal suffrage, but to those either of private organisms (capitalist firms, General Staffs, etc.) or of great civil servants unknown to the country at large, etc. But what does that signify if not that by "State" should be understood not only the apparatus of government, but also the "private" apparatus of "hegemony" or civil society? It should be noted how from this critique of the State which does not intervene, which trails behind events, etc., there is born the dictatorial ideological current of the Right, with its reinforcement of the executive, etc. However, Halévy's book should be read to see whether he too has taken this path: it is not unlikely in principle, given his antecedents (sympathies for Sorel, for Maurras, etc.). [1930-32]

Curzio Malaparte, in the introduction to his little volume on the *Technique of the Coup d'Etat*, seems to assert the equivalence of the formula: "Everything within the State, nothing outside the State, nothing against the State" with the proposition: "Where there is freedom, there is no State". In the latter proposition, the term "freedom" cannot be taken in its ordinary meaning of "political freedom, freedom of the press, etc.", but as counterposed to "necessity"; it is related to Engels' proposition on the passage from the rule of necessity to the rule of freedom.<sup>62</sup> Malaparte has not caught even the faintest whiff of the significance of the proposition.

[1931-32]

In the (anyway superficial) polemic over the functions of the State (which here means the State as a politico-judicial organisation in the narrow sense), the expression "the State as *veilleur de nuit*" corresponds to the Italian expression "the State as policeman"<sup>63</sup> and means a State whose functions are limited to the safeguarding of public order and of respect for the laws. The fact is glossed over that in this form of régime (which anyway has never existed except on paper, as a limiting hypothesis) hegemony over its historical development belongs to private forces, to civil society—which is "State" too, indeed is the State itself.

<sup>61</sup> The three days in which the people of Paris rose and drove out Charles X.  
\* For this series of facts, see as primary material the publications of Paul Louis and Maurice Block's *Political Dictionary*; for the French Revolution, see especially Aulard; see too Andler's notes to the *Manifesto*. For Italy, see Luzzo's book on Masonry and the Risorgimento—highly tendentious.

<sup>62</sup> At the end of his *Socialism: Utopian and Scientific*.  
<sup>63</sup> *Veilleur de nuit* means "night-watchman", see below. The Italian expression referred to is "*Stato-carabiniere*".

It seems that the expression *veilleur de nuit*, which should have a more sarcastic ring than "the State as policeman", comes from Lassalle. Its opposite should be "ethical State" or "interventionist State" in general, but there are differences between the two expressions. The concept of ethical State is of philosophical and intellectual origin (belonging to the intellectuals: Hegel), and in fact could be brought into conjunction with the concept of State-*veilleur de nuit*; for it refers rather to the autonomous, educative and moral activity of the secular State, by contrast with the cosmopolitanism and the interference of the religious-ecclesiastical organisation as a mediaeval residue. The concept of interventionist State is of economic origin, and is connected on the one hand with tendencies supporting protection and economic nationalism, and on the other with the attempt to force a particular State personnel, of landowning and feudal origin, to take on the "protection" of the working classes against the excesses of capitalism (policy of Bismarck and of Disraeli).<sup>64</sup>

These diverse tendencies may combine in various ways, and in fact have so combined. Naturally liberals ("economists") are for the "State as *veilleur de nuit*", and would like the historical initiative to be left to civil society and to the various forces which spring up there—with the "State" as guardian of "fair play" and of the rules of the game. Intellectuals draw very significant distinctions as to when they are liberals and when they are interventionists (they may be liberals in the economic field and interventionists in the cultural field, etc.). The Catholics would like the State to be interventionist one hundred per cent in their favour; failing that, or where they are in a minority, they call for a "neutral" State, so that it should not support their adversaries. [1935: 1st version 1930]

The following argument is worth reflecting upon: is the conception of the *gendarme*-nightwatchman State (leaving aside the polemical designation: *gendarme*, nightwatchman, etc.) not in fact the only conception of the State to transcend the purely "economic-corporate" stages?

We are still on the terrain of the identification of State and government—an identification which is precisely a representation of the economic-corporate form, in other words of the confusion between civil society and political society. For it should be

<sup>64</sup> Bismarck put through legislation providing for sickness and old age pensions; Disraeli denounced certain of the worst excesses of mid-Victorian capitalism in his novels, and his ministry (1874-80) limited the working day for women and children, passed the Combination Act of 1875 giving limited recognition to trade unions, and put through the Public Health Act and the Artisans' Dwelling Act in the same year, etc.

remarked that the general notion of State includes elements which need to be referred back to the notion of civil society (in the sense that one might say that State = political society + civil society, in other words hegemony protected by the armour of coercion). In a doctrine of the State which conceives the latter as tendentially capable of withering away and of being subsumed into regulated society, the argument is a fundamental one. It is possible to imagine the coercive element of the State withering away by degrees, as ever-more conspicuous elements of regulated society (or ethical State or civil society) make their appearance.

The expressions "ethical State" or "civil society" would thus mean that this "image" of a State without a State was present to the greatest political and legal thinkers, in so far as they placed themselves on the terrain of pure science (pure utopia, since based on the premise that all men are really equal and hence equally rational and moral, i.e. capable of accepting the law spontaneously, freely, and not through coercion, as imposed by another class, as something external to consciousness).

It must be remembered that the expression "nightwatchman" for the liberal State comes from Lassalle, i.e. from a dogmatic and non-dialectical statalist (look closely at Lassalle's doctrines on this point and on the State in general, in contrast with Marxism). In the doctrine of the State as regulated society, one will have to pass from a phase in which "State" will be equal to "government", and "State" will be identified with "civil society", to a phase of the State as nightwatchman—i.e. of a coercive organisation which will safeguard the development of the continually proliferating elements of regulated society, and which will therefore progressively reduce its own authoritarian and forcible interventions. Nor can this conjure up the idea of a new "liberalism", even though the beginning of an era of organic liberty be imminent. [1930-32]

If it is true that no type of State can avoid passing through a phase of economic-corporate primitivism, it may be deduced that the content of the political hegemony of the new social group which has founded the new type of State must be predominantly of an economic order: what is involved is the reorganisation of the structure and the real relations between men on the one hand and the world of the economy or of production on the other. The superstructural elements will inevitably be few in number, and have a character of foresight and of struggle, but as yet few "planned" elements. Cultural policy will above all be negative, a critique of the past; it will be aimed at erasing from the memory and at

destroying. The lines of construction will as yet be "broad lines", sketches, which might (and should) be changed at all times, so as to be consistent with the new structure as it is formed. This precisely did not happen in the period of the mediaeval communes; for culture, which remained a function of the Church, was precisely anti-economic in character (i.e. against the nascent capitalist economy); it was not directed towards giving hegemony to the new class, but rather to preventing the latter from acquiring it. Hence Humanism and the Renaissance were reactionary, because they signalled the defeat of the new class, the negation of the economic world which was proper to it, etc. [1931-32]

Another element to examine is that of the organic relations between the domestic and foreign policies of a State. Is it domestic policies which determine foreign policy, or vice versa? In this case too, it will be necessary to distinguish: between great powers, with relative international autonomy, and other powers; also, between different forms of government (a government like that of Napoleon III had two policies, apparently—reactionary internally, and liberal abroad).

Conditions in a State before and after a war. It is obvious that, in an alliance, what counts are the conditions in which a State finds itself at the moment of peace. Therefore it may happen that whoever has exercised hegemony during the war ends up by losing it as a result of the enfeeblement suffered in the course of the struggle, and is forced to see a "subordinate" who has been more skilful or "luckier" become hegemonic. This occurs in "world wars" when the geographic situation compels a State to throw all its resources into the crucible: it wins through its alliances, but victory finds it prostrate, etc. This is why in the concept of "great power" it is necessary to take many elements into account, and especially those which are "permanent"—i.e. especially "economic and financial potential" and population. [1932-32]

#### ORGANISATION OF NATIONAL SOCIETIES

I have remarked elsewhere that in any given society nobody is disorganised and without party, provided that one takes organisation and party in a broad and not a formal sense. In this multiplicity of private associations (which are of two kinds: natural, and contractual or voluntary) one or more predominates relatively or absolutely—constituting the hegemonic apparatus of one social group over the rest of the population (or civil society): the basis

for the State in the narrow sense of the governmental-coercive apparatus.

It always happens that individuals belong to more than one private association, and often to associations which are objectively in contradiction to one another. A totalitarian<sup>65</sup> policy is aimed precisely: 1. at ensuring that the members of a particular party find in that party all the satisfactions that they formerly found in a multiplicity of organisations, i.e. at breaking all the threads that bind these members to extraneous cultural organisms; 2. at destroying all other organisations or at incorporating them into a system of which the party is the sole regulator. This occurs: 1. when the given party is the bearer of a new culture—then one has a progressive phase; 2. when the given party wishes to prevent another force, bearer of a new culture, from becoming itself "totalitarian"—then one has an objectively regressive and reactionary phase, even if that reaction (as invariably happens) does not avow itself, and seeks itself to appear as the bearer of a new culture.

Luigi Einaudi, in *Riforma Sociale* for May-June 1931, reviews a French work *Les sociétés de la nation, Etude sur les éléments constitutifs de la nation française*, by Etienne Martin Saint-Léon (volume of 415 pages, éd. Spes, Paris, 1930), in which some of these organisations are studied—but only those which exist formally. (For example, do the readers of a newspaper form an organisation, or not?, etc.) In any case, in as much as the subject was dealt with, see the book and Einaudi's review as well. [1930-32]

#### WHO IS A LEGISLATOR?

The concept of "legislator" must inevitably be identified with the concept of "politician". Since all men are "political beings", all are also "legislators". But distinctions will have to be made. "Legislator" has a precise juridical and official meaning—i.e. it means those persons who are empowered by the law to enact laws. But it can have other meanings too.

Every man, in as much as he is active, i.e. living, contributes to modifying the social environment in which he develops (to modifying certain of its characteristics or to preserving others); in other words, he tends to establish "norms", rules of living and of behaviour. One's circle of activity may be greater or smaller, one's awareness of one's own action and aims may be greater or smaller; furthermore, the representative power may be greater or smaller, and will

<sup>65</sup> See note 33 on p. 147.

be put into practice to a greater or lesser extent in its normative, systematic expression by the "represented". A father is a legislator for his children, but the paternal authority will be more or less conscious, more or less obeyed and so forth.

In general, it may be said that the distinction between ordinary men and others who are more specifically legislators is provided by the fact that this second group not only formulates directives which will become a norm of conduct for the others, but at the same time creates the instruments by means of which the directives themselves will be "imposed", and by means of which it will verify their execution. Of this second group, the greatest legislative power belongs to the State personnel (elected and career officials), who have at their disposal the legal coercive powers of the State. But this does not mean that the leaders of "private" organisms and organisations do not have coercive sanctions at their disposal too, ranging even up to the death penalty. The maximum of legislative capacity can be inferred when a perfect formulation of directives is matched by a perfect arrangement of the organisms of execution and verification, and by a perfect preparation of the "spontaneous" consent of the masses who must "live" those directives, modifying their own habits, their own will, their own convictions to conform with those directives and with the objectives which they propose to achieve. If everyone is a legislator in the broadest sense of the concept, he continues to be a legislator even if he accepts directives from others—if, as he carries them out, he makes certain that others are carrying them out too; if, having understood their spirit, he propagates them as though making them into rules specifically applicable to limited and definite zones of living. [1933]

#### RELIGION, STATE, PARTY

In *Mein Kampf*, Hitler writes: "The founding or the destruction of a religion is an action of immeasurably greater importance than the founding or the destruction of a State: not to speak of a party. . ." Superficial and acritical. The three elements—religion (or "active" conception of the world), State, party—are indissoluble, and in the real process of historico-political development there is a necessary passage from one to the other.

In Machiavelli, in the ways and language of the time, an understanding of this necessary homogeneity and interrelation of the three elements can be observed. To lose one's soul in order to save

one's country or State is an element of absolute laicism, of positive and negative conception of the world (against religion, or the dominant conception). In the modern world, a party is such—integrally, and not, as happens, a fraction of a larger party—when it is conceived, organised and led in ways and in forms such that it will develop integrally into a State (an integral State, and not into a government technically understood) and into a conception of the world. The development of the party into a State reacts upon the party and requires of it a continuous reorganisation and development, just as the development of the party and State into a conception of the world, i.e. into a total and molecular (individual) transformation of ways of thinking and acting, reacts upon the State and the party, compelling them to reorganise continually and confronting them with new and original problems to solve. It is evident that such a conception of the world is hindered in its practical development by blind, unilateral "party" fanaticism (in this case that of a sect, of a fraction of a larger party, within which the struggle takes place), i.e. by the absence either of a State conception or of a conception of the world capable of developing because historically necessary.

The political life of today furnishes ample evidence of these mental limitations and deficiencies, which, besides, provoke dramatic struggles—for they are themselves the means by which historical development in practice occurs. But the past, and the Italian past which interests us most, from Machiavelli onwards, is no less rich in experiences; for all of history bears witness to the present. [1933]

#### STATE AND PARTIES

The function of hegemony or political leadership exercised by parties can be estimated from the evolution of the internal life of the parties themselves. If the State represents the coercive and punitive force of juridical regulation of a country, the parties—representing the spontaneous adhesion of an élite to such a regulation, considered as a type of collective society to which the entire mass must be educated—must show in their specific internal life that they have assimilated as principles of moral conduct those rules which in the State are legal obligations. In the parties necessity has already become freedom, and thence is born the immense political value (i.e. value for political leadership) of the internal discipline of a party, and hence the value as a criterion of such

discipline in estimating the growth potential of the various parties. From this point of view the parties can be considered as schools of State life. Elements of party life: character (resistance to the pressures of surpassed cultures), honour (fearless will in maintaining the new type of culture and life), dignity (awareness of operating for a higher end), etc. [1930-32]

#### STATOLATRY

Attitude of each particular social group towards its own State. The analysis would not be accurate if no account were taken of the two forms in which the State presents itself in the language and culture of specific epochs, i.e. as civil society and as political society. The term "statolatry" is applied to a particular attitude towards the "government by functionaries" or political society, which in everyday language is the form of State life to which the term of State is applied and which is commonly understood as the entire State. The assertion that the State can be identified with individuals (the individuals of a social group), as an element of active culture (i.e. as a movement to create a new civilisation, a new type of man and of citizen), must serve to determine the will to construct within the husk of political society a complex and well-articulated civil society, in which the individual can govern himself without his self-government thereby entering into conflict with political society—but rather becoming its normal continuation, its organic complement. For some social groups, which before their ascent to autonomous State life have not had a long independent period of cultural and moral development on their own (as was made possible in mediaeval society and under the absolute régimes by the juridical existence<sup>66</sup> of the privileged Estates or orders), a period of statolatry is necessary and indeed opportune. This "statolatry" is nothing other than the normal form of "State life", or at least of initiation to autonomous State life and to the creation of a "civil society" which it was not historically possible to create before the ascent to independent State life. However, this kind of "statolatry" must not be abandoned to itself, must not, especially, become theoretical fanaticism or be conceived of as "perpetual". It must be criticised, precisely in order to develop and produce new forms of State life, in which the initiative of individuals and groups will have a "State" character,

<sup>66</sup> The Einaudi edition gives *esigenza* = "need", instead of Gramsci's original *esistenza* = "existence".

even if it is not due to the "government of the functionaries" (make State life become "spontaneous"). [1931-32]

#### "MERITS" OF THE RULING CLASSES

In view of the fact that the identity State/class is not easy to understand, there is something strange about the way in which a government (State) is able to reflect back upon the class it represents, as a merit and a source of prestige, the fact that it has finally done what should have been done for fifty years and more—and which should therefore be a demerit and a source of shame.<sup>67</sup> One lets a man starve until he is fifty; when he is fifty, one finally notices him. In private life, such behaviour would warrant a good kicking. In the case of the State, it appears to be a "merit". Not merely that, but the fact that one "washes oneself" at the age of fifty appears to be a sign of superiority over other men of fifty who have always washed. One hears this kind of thing said about drainage schemes, public works, roads, etc., i.e. about a country's basic social equipment. The fact that a country provides itself with this equipment, with which others have provided themselves in their day, is loudly acclaimed and trumpeted forth, and the others are told: do as much, if you can. But the others cannot, because they have already done so in their day, and this is presented as a sign of their "impotence".

At all events, the fact that the State/government, conceived as an autonomous force, should reflect back its prestige upon the class upon which it is based, is of the greatest practical and theoretical importance, and deserves to be analysed fully if one wants a more realistic concept of the State itself. Moreover, this phenomenon is not something exceptional, or characteristic of one kind of State only. It can, it seems, be incorporated into the function of élites or vanguards, i.e. of parties, in relation to the class which they represent. This class, often, as an economic fact (which is what every class is essentially) might not enjoy any intellectual or moral prestige, i.e. might be incapable of establishing its hegemony, hence of founding a State. Hence the function of monarchies, even in the modern era; hence, too, in particular, the phenomenon (especially in England and in Germany) whereby the leading

<sup>67</sup> A clear reference to fascist propaganda extolling the régime's achievements in the field of public works, etc. In England in the 'thirties, approval for fascist Italy often took the form of "at least Mussolini has got the trains to run on time", etc.



personnel of the bourgeois class organised into a State can be constituted by elements of the old feudal classes, who have been dispossessed of their traditional economic predominance (Junkers and Lords), but who have found new forms of economic power in industry and in the banks, and who have not fused with the bourgeoisie but have remained united to their traditional social group.<sup>68</sup> [1933]

#### HISTORICAL BELLES-LETTRES

The position taken up in practice by Croce is an essential element of any analysis or critique of his philosophical position, indeed it is the fundamental element. In Croce, philosophy and "ideology" finally become identical, and philosophy is revealed as nothing other than a "practical instrument" for organisation and action—for organising a party, indeed an international of parties, and for a course of action in practice. Croce's speech to the Oxford philosophical congress<sup>69</sup> was in fact a political manifesto, for an international union of the great intellectuals of all nations—especially those of Europe. Moreover, this undeniably might become an important party, with a considerable role to play.

Broadly speaking, one can already discern in the world of today a phenomenon which resembles the rift between "spiritual" and "temporal" in the Middle Ages—but a phenomenon that is far more complex than its predecessor, to the extent that modern life itself is more complex. To an ever-increasing extent, regressive and conservative social groupings are being reduced to their initial economic-corporate stage, while the progressive and innovatory groupings are still in their initial, precisely economic-corporate phase. The traditional intellectuals are detaching themselves from the social grouping to which they have hitherto given the highest and most comprehensive form—hence the most extensive and perfect consciousness of the modern State. In so doing, they are accomplishing an act of incalculable historical significance; they are marking and ratifying the crisis of the State in its decisive form. But these intellectuals neither have the organisation which the Church possessed, nor anything comparable to it, and in that respect the crisis of today is more acute than that of the Middle Ages; the latter lasted several centuries, up to the French Revolu-

tion, when the social grouping that had been economically the motor force in Europe throughout the millennium was able to present itself as an integral "State", possessing all the intellectual and moral forces it needed to organise a complete and perfect society. Today, the "spiritual" which is detaching itself from the "temporal", and distinguishing itself as autonomous of the latter, is something disorganic, lacking a centre, an unstable diaspora of great cultural personalities, "without a Pope" and without a territory. This process of disintegration of the modern State is, however, far more catastrophic than the mediaeval historical process, which was disintegrative and integrative at the same time, given the particular grouping which was the motor of the historical process itself, and given the type of State which had existed since the beginning of the millennium in Europe—a State which was innocent of the centralisation of today, and which could be called "federative of the dominant classes" rather than the State of a single dominant class.

It is worth considering the extent to which Gentile's "actualism"<sup>70</sup> corresponds to the positive phase of the State, whereas Croce provides the opposition to this. The concept of "unity in the act" allows Gentile to recognise as "history" what is anti-history for Croce.<sup>71</sup> For Gentile history is entirely State history, while for Croce it is "ethical-political". In other words, Croce seeks to maintain a distinction between civil society and political society, between hegemony and dictatorship; the great intellectuals exercise hegemony, which presupposes a certain collaboration, i.e. an active and voluntary (free) consent, i.e. a liberal, democratic régime. Gentile sees the economic-corporate phase as an ethical phase within the historical act: hegemony and dictatorship are indistinguishable, force and consent are simply equivalent; one cannot distinguish political society from civil society; only the State, and of course the State-as-government, exists, etc.

The same conflicting positions which emerge in the philosophical sphere, between Croce and Gentile, appear again in the field of political economy, between Einaudi and the followers of Gentile.\* Spirito's<sup>72</sup> concept of citizen as State functionary derives directly from the absence of separation between political and civil society, between political hegemony and State-political government. In

<sup>68</sup> See note 6 on p. 216.

<sup>69</sup> Croce addressed the Seventh International Philosophy Congress at Oxford in September 1930 on "Anti-History". See note 19 on p. 137.

<sup>70</sup> See note 70 on p. 424.

<sup>71</sup> See note 6 on p. 128.

\* See the Einaudi-Benini-Spirito polemic in *Nuovi Studi*, 1930.

<sup>72</sup> See notes 59 on p. 257 and 120 on p. 470.

other words, it derives from the anti-historicity or ahistoricity of the conception of the State that is implicit in Spirito's position, despite his peremptory assertions and polemical rantings. Spirito refuses to recognise that, since every form of property is linked to the State, even for the classical economists the latter intervenes at every moment of economic life—which is a continuous web of transfers of property. Spirito's position, concretely, represents a return to the pure economicity of which he accuses his opponents. It is interesting to note that this position contains the essence of "Americanism",<sup>75</sup> since America has not yet emerged from the economic-corporate phase which Europe passed through in the Middle Ages—in other words, has not yet created a conception of the world or a group of great intellectuals to lead the people within the ambit of civil society. In this sense it is true that America is under the influence of Europe, and of European history. (This question of the basic form of the State in the U.S.A. is a very complex one, but the kernel of the question seems to me to be precisely this.) [1930-32]

#### "SUBVERSIVE"

The purely Italian concept of "subversive"<sup>74</sup> can be explained as follows: a negative rather than a positive class position—the "people" is aware that it has enemies, but only identifies them empirically as the so-called *signori*.<sup>76</sup> Contained in the concept of *signore* there is much of the old dislike of country for town; dress is a fundamental element of distinction. There is also dislike of officialdom—the only form in which the State is perceived. The peasant, and even the small farmer, hates the civil servant; he does not hate the State, for he does not understand it. He sees the civil servant as a "*signore*", even if he is himself in fact better off economically; hence the apparent contradiction whereby the *signore* is often at the same time a *morto di fame*<sup>76</sup> as far as the peasant is

<sup>75</sup> See "Americanism and Fordism" on pp. 277-318.

<sup>74</sup> The term *sovversivo* was used by both socialists and fascists to describe themselves, as well as by others to describe them—which gives an idea of the difference between it and the English equivalent "subversive". See, for example, Gramsci's article in *Ordine Nuovo*, 22 June 1921, "*Sovversismo Reazionario*", in which he comments sarcastically on Mussolini's motives for stressing his "subversive" past in a speech to the Chamber of Deputies, and suggests that Mussolini was never so very subversive in reality.

<sup>76</sup> "Gentleman" would be the nearest English equivalent of *signore*, but since this note is directly on the concept itself, the word has been left in the Italian.

<sup>76</sup> Literally "starveling", the term has overtones of both pity and contempt. See following paragraph.

concerned. This "generic" hatred is still "semi-feudal" rather than modern in character, and cannot be taken as evidence of class consciousness—merely as the first glimmer of such consciousness, in other words, merely as the basic negative, polemical attitude. Not only does the people have no precise consciousness of its own historical identity, it is not even conscious of the historical identity or the exact limits of its adversary. The lower classes, historically on the defensive, can only achieve self-awareness via a series of negations, via their consciousness of the identity and class limits of their enemy; but it is precisely this process which has not yet come to the surface, at least not nationally.

A further element towards understanding the concept of "subversive" is furnished by the stratum known typically as the *morti di fame*. The *morti di fame* are not a homogeneous stratum, and serious mistakes can be made if they are identified abstractly. In the village, and in the small urban centres of certain agricultural regions, there exist two distinct strata of *morti di fame*: the day-labourers, and the petty intellectuals. The essential characteristic of the day-labourers is not their economic situation but their intellectual and moral condition. The typical peasant of these regions is the smallholder or the more primitive share-cropper (whose rent takes the form of a third, half, or even two-thirds of his crop, depending on the fertility and location of his holding), who owns a few tools, a pair of oxen, and a cottage which he has often built himself on days when he is not working, and who has obtained the necessary capital either by emigrating for a few years, or by spending a few years "down the pits" or serving in the *carabinieri*,<sup>77</sup> etc., or as a servant for a big landowner—i.e. by "contriving" and saving. The day-labourer on the other hand, unable or unwilling to "contrive", possesses nothing, is a *morto di fame*, because day labour is scarce and irregular.

The petit-bourgeois *morto di fame* came originally from the rural bourgeoisie. Property gets broken up among large families until it vanishes altogether, but the members of this class are not prepared to work with their hands. In this way there is formed a famished stratum of aspirants to minor municipal appointments, as clerks, messengers, etc. This stratum constitutes a disruptive element in the life of the countryside, always thirsting for changes (elections,

<sup>77</sup> The *carabinieri*, founded in Piedmont in 1814 as a military force for maintaining internal security, after the Risorgimento became a national police force, organised on a military footing and independent from the ordinary police. This is still the case today.

etc.), and furnishes the local "subversive"; since it is fairly numerous, it has a certain importance. It allies itself especially with the rural bourgeoisie against the peasantry, and organises the *morti di fame* to serve its interests. These strata exist in every region, and have ramifications in the towns, too, where they merge into the criminal underworld or into the shifting milieu which surrounds it. Many petty clerks in the towns originate socially from these strata, and conserve the arrogant mentality of the impoverished nobleman, of the landowner who endures work under compulsion. The "subversivism" of these strata has two faces, one turned to the left and one to the right, but the left face is simply a means of blackmail; at the decisive moments they always move to the right, and their desperate "courage" always prefers to have the *carabinieri* on their side.

A further element to examine is the so-called "internationalism" of the Italian people, which is linked to the concept of "subversivism". In reality, this is a kind of vague "cosmopolitanism", related to certain easily identifiable historical phenomena: to the cosmopolitanism and the universalism of the Catholic Middle Ages, centred on Italy and preserved through the absence of any Italian "political and national history". Little national or State consciousness in the modern sense. I have noted elsewhere<sup>78</sup> that there has existed, and still exists, a particular form of Italian chauvinism, more widespread than might at first appear. The two observations are not contradictory. In Italy, political, territorial and national unity enjoy a scanty tradition (or perhaps no tradition at all, since before 1870 Italy was never a unified entity, and even the name Italy, which in Roman times meant Southern and Central Italy up to the Magra and the Rubicon, during the Middle Ages lost ground to the name of Longobardia: see the study by C. Cipolla on the name "Italia", published in the *Atti dell'Accademia di Torino*). However, Italy did have, and preserve, a cultural tradition going back to the period 1300-1700—not, however, to classical antiquity, although humanism and renaissance both claimed a continuity with the classical era. This cultural unity was the basis, and a very weak one at that, of the Risorgimento and of national unity; it served to group the most active and intelligent strata of the population around the bourgeoisie, and it is still the substratum of popular nationalism. As a consequence of the absence in this sentiment of politico-military or politico-

<sup>78</sup> In a note on d'Annunzio, PP, p. 13.

economic elements, i.e. of the elements which are at the basis of French, German or American nationalist psychology, it comes about that many so-called "subversives" and "internationalists" are "chauvinists" in this sense, without being aware of any contradiction. What one has to note if one wants to understand the virulence which this cultural chauvinism sometimes assumes is the following: the fact that in Italy a great scientific, artistic and literary flowering coincided with the period of political, military and State decadence. (Sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Explain this phenomenon. Noble, courtly culture, i.e. when the bourgeoisie of the Communes was already decadent, and wealth had become usurious rather than productive, with concentrations of "luxury", the prelude to total economic decadence.) The concept of revolutionary and of internationalist, in the modern sense of the word, is correlative with the precise concept of State and of class: little understanding of the State means little class consciousness (and understanding of the State exists not only when one defends it, but also when one attacks it in order to overthrow it); hence low level of effectiveness of the parties, etc. Gypsy bands or political nomadism are not dangerous phenomena,<sup>79</sup> and similarly Italian subversivism and internationalism were not dangerous. Popular "subversivism" correlates with "subversivism" at the top, i.e. with the fact of there never having existed a "rule of law", but only a politics characterised by absolute power and by cliques around individuals or groups.

All these observations, naturally, cannot be taken as categorical or absolute: they constitute an attempt to describe certain aspects of a situation. Firstly, in order to be able the better to evaluate the activity undertaken to change it (or the non-activity, i.e. the failure to understand one's own task). Secondly, in order to give greater prominence to those groups which rose above it, as a result of having understood the situation and modified it within their own ranks. [1930]

#### "WAVE OF MATERIALISM" AND "CRISIS OF AUTHORITY"

That aspect of the modern crisis which is bemoaned as a "wave of materialism" is related to what is called the "crisis of authority". If the ruling class has lost its consensus, i.e. is no longer "leading"<sup>80</sup>

<sup>79</sup> For the term "gypsy" see "Voluntarism and Social Masses" on pp. 202-4 and note 109 on p. 204.

<sup>80</sup> See note 5 on p. 55.

but only "dominant", exercising coercive force alone, this means precisely that the great masses have become detached from their traditional ideologies, and no longer believe what they used to believe previously, etc. The crisis consists precisely in the fact that the old is dying and the new cannot be born; in this interregnum a great variety of morbid symptoms appear. N.B. this paragraph should be completed by some observations which I made on the so-called "problem of the younger generation"<sup>81</sup>—a problem caused by the "crisis of authority" of the old generations in power, and by the mechanical impediment that has been imposed on those who could exercise hegemony, which prevents them from carrying out their mission.

The problem is the following: can a rift between popular masses and ruling ideologies as serious as that which emerged after the war be "cured" by the simple exercise of force, preventing the new ideologies from imposing themselves? Will the interregnum, the crisis whose historically normal solution is blocked in this way, necessarily be resolved in favour of a restoration of the old? Given the character of the ideologies, that can be ruled out—yet not in an absolute sense. Meanwhile physical depression will lead in the long run to a widespread scepticism, and a new "arrangement" will be found—in which, for example, catholicism will even more become simply Jesuitism, etc.

From this too one may conclude that highly favourable conditions are being created for an unprecedented expansion of historical materialism. The very poverty which at first inevitably characterises historical materialism as a theory diffused widely among the masses will help it to spread. The death of the old ideologies takes the form of scepticism with regard to all theories and general formulae; of application to the pure economic fact (earnings, etc.), and to a form of politics which is not simply realistic in fact (this is always the case) but which is cynical in its immediate manifestation (remember the story of the *Prelude to Machiavelli*,<sup>82</sup> written perhaps under the influence of Professor Rensi, which at a certain moment—in 1921 or 1922—extolled slavery as a modern means of political economy).

But this reduction to economics and to politics means precisely a reduction of the highest superstructures to the level of those which adhere more closely to the structure itself—in other words, the possibility and necessity of creating a new culture. [1930]

<sup>81</sup> PP., pp. 104-7.

<sup>82</sup> By Mussolini.