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1. Intellectuals and Hegemony

Every “essential” social group which emerges into history out of the preceding economic structure, and as an expression of a development of this structure, has found (at least in all of history up to the present) categories of intellectuals already in existence and which seemed indeed to represent an historical continuity uninterrupted even by the most complicated and radical changes in political and social forms.

The most typical of these categories of intellectuals is that of the ecclesiastics, who for a long time (for a whole phase of history, which is partly characterised by this very monopoly) held a monopoly of a number of important services: religious ideology, that is the philosophy and science of the age, together with schools, education, morality, justice, charity, good works, etc. The category of ecclesiastics can be considered the category of intellectuals organically bound to the landed aristocracy. It had equal status juridically with the aristocracy, with which it shared the exercise of feudal ownership of land, and the use of state privileges connected with property.^[B] But the monopoly held by the ecclesiastics in the superstructural field^[C] was not exercised without a struggle or without limitations, and hence there took place the birth, in various forms (to be gone into and studied concretely), of other categories, favoured and enabled to expand by the growing strength of the central power of the monarch, right up to absolutism. Thus we find the formation of the *noblesse de robe*, with its own privileges, a stratum of administrators, etc., scholars and scientists, theorists, non-ecclesiastical philosophers, etc.

Since these various categories of traditional intellectuals experience through an “*esprit de corps*” their uninterrupted historical continuity and their special qualification, they thus put themselves forward as autonomous and independent of the dominant social group. This self-assessment is not without consequences in the ideological and political field, consequences of wide-ranging import. The whole of idealist philosophy can easily be connected with this position assumed by the social complex of intellectuals and can be defined as the expression of that social utopia by which the intellectuals think of themselves as “independent”, autonomous, endowed with a character of their own, etc.

One should note however that if the Pope and the leading hierarchy of the Church consider themselves more linked to Christ and to the apostles than they are to senators Agnelli and Benni^[5] the same does not hold for Gentile and Croce, for example: Croce in particular feels himself closely linked to Aristotle and Plato, but he does not conceal, on the other hand, his links with senators Agnelli and Benni, and it is precisely here that one can discern the most significant character of Croce's philosophy.

What are the "maximum" limits of acceptance of the term "intellectual"? Can one find a unitary criterion to characterise equally all the diverse and disparate activities of intellectuals and to distinguish these at the same time and in an essential way from the activities of other social groupings? The most widespread error of method seems to me that of having looked for this criterion of distinction in the intrinsic nature of intellectual activities, rather than in the ensemble of the system of relations in which these activities (and therefore the intellectual groups who personify them) have their place within the general complex of social relations. Indeed the worker or proletarian, for example, is not specifically characterised by his manual or instrumental work, but by performing this work in specific conditions and in specific social relations (apart from the consideration that purely physical labour does not exist and that even Taylor's phrase of "trained gorilla"^[6] is a metaphor to indicate a limit in a certain direction: in any physical work, even the most degraded and mechanical, there exists a minimum of technical qualification, that is, a minimum of creative intellectual activity.) And we have already observed that the entrepreneur, by virtue of his very function, must have to some degree a certain number of qualifications of an intellectual nature although his part in society is determined not by these, but by the general social relations which specifically characterise the position of the entrepreneur within industry.

All men are intellectuals, one could therefore say: but not all men have in society the function of intellectuals.^[7]

When one distinguishes between intellectuals and non-intellectuals, one is referring in reality only to the immediate social function of the professional category of the intellectuals, that is, one has in mind the direction in which their specific professional activity is weighted, whether towards intellectual elaboration or towards muscular-nervous effort. This means that, although one can speak of intellectuals, one cannot speak of non-intellectuals, because non-intellectuals do not exist. But even the relationship between efforts of intellectual-cerebral elaboration and muscular-nervous effort is not always the same, so that there are varying degrees of specific

intellectual activity. There is no human activity from which every form of intellectual participation can be excluded: *homo faber* cannot be separated from *homo sapiens*.^[7] Each man, finally, outside his professional activity, carries on some form of intellectual activity, that is, he is a “philosopher”, an artist, a man of taste, he participates in a particular conception of the world, has a conscious line of moral conduct, and therefore contributes to sustain a conception of the world or to modify it, that is, to bring into being new modes of thought.

The problem of creating a new stratum of intellectuals consists therefore in the critical elaboration of the intellectual activity that exists in everyone at a certain degree of development, modifying its relationship with the muscular-nervous effort towards a new equilibrium, and ensuring that the muscular-nervous effort itself, in so far as it is an element of a general practical activity, which is perpetually innovating the physical and social world, becomes the foundation of a new and integral conception of the world. The traditional and vulgarised type of the intellectual is given by the man of letters, the philosopher, the artist. Therefore journalists, who claim to be men of letters, philosophers, artists, also regard themselves as the “true” intellectuals. In the modern world, technical education, closely bound to industrial labour even at the most primitive and unqualified level, must form the basis of the new type of intellectual...

The relationship between the intellectuals and the world of production is not as direct as it is with the fundamental social groups but is, in varying degrees, “mediated” by the whole fabric of society and by the complex of superstructures, of which the intellectuals are, precisely, the “functionaries”. It should be possible both to measure the “organic quality” [*organicità*] of the various intellectual strata and their degree of connection with a fundamental social group, and to establish a gradation of their functions and of the superstructures from the bottom to the top (from the structural base upwards). What we can do, for the moment, is to fix two major superstructural “levels”: the one that can be called “civil society”, that is the ensemble of organisms commonly called “private”, and that of “political society” or “the State”. These two levels correspond on the one hand to the function of “hegemony” which the dominant group exercises throughout society and on the other hand to that of “direct domination” or command exercised through the State and “juridical” government. The functions in question are precisely organisational and connective. The intellectuals are the dominant group’s “deputies” exercising the subaltern functions of social hegemony and political government. These comprise:

1. The “spontaneous” consent given by the great masses of the population to the general direction imposed on social life by the dominant fundamental group; this consent is “historically” caused by the prestige (and consequent confidence) which the dominant group enjoys because of its position and function in the world of production.

2. The apparatus of state coercive power which “legally” enforces discipline on those groups who do not “consent” either actively or passively. This apparatus is, however, constituted for the whole of society in anticipation of moments of crisis of command and direction when spontaneous consent has failed.

This way of posing the problem has as a result a considerable extension of the concept of intellectual, but it is the only way which enables one to reach a concrete approximation of reality. It also lashes with preconceptions of caste. The function of organizing social hegemony and state domination certainly gives rise to a particular division of labour and therefore to a whole hierarchy of qualifications in some of which there is no apparent attribution of directive or organisational functions. For example, in the apparatus of social and state direction there exist a whole series of jobs of a manual and instrumental character (non-executive work, agents rather than officials or functionaries).^[11] It is obvious that such a distinction has to be made just as it is obvious that other distinctions have to be made as well. Indeed, intellectual activity must also be distinguished in terms of its intrinsic characteristics, according to levels which in moments of extreme opposition represent a real qualitative difference — at the highest level would be the creators of the various sciences, philosophy, art, etc., at the lowest the most humble “administrators” and divulgators of pre-existing, traditional, accumulated intellectual wealth...

The methodological criterion on which our own study must be based is the following: that the supremacy of a social group manifests itself in two ways, as ‘domination’ and as ‘intellectual and moral leadership’. A social group dominates antagonistic groups, which it tends to ‘liquidate’, or to subjugate perhaps even by armed force; it leads kindred and allied groups. A social group can, and indeed must, already exercise ‘leadership’ before winning governmental power (this indeed is one of the principal conditions for the winning of such power); it subsequently becomes dominant when it exercises power, but even if it holds it firmly in its grasp, it must continue to ‘lead’ as well...

...there does not exist any independent class of intellectuals, but every social group has its own stratum of intellectuals, or tends to form one; however, the intellectuals of the historically (and concretely) progressive class, in the given conditions, exercise such a power of attraction that, in the last analysis, they end up by subjugating the intellectuals of the other social groups; they thereby create a system of solidarity between all the intellectuals, with bonds of a psychological nature (vanity, etc.) and often of a caste character (technico-juridical, corporate, etc.). This phenomenon manifests itself 'spontaneously' in the historical periods in which the given social group is really progressive—i.e. really causes the whole society to move forwards, not merely satisfying its own existential requirements, but continuously augmenting its cadres for the conquest of ever new spheres of economic and productive activity. As soon as the dominant social group has exhausted its function, the ideological bloc tends to crumble away; then spontaneity may be replaced by 'constraint' in ever less disguised and in direct forms, culminating in outright police measures and *coups d'etat*...

2. Revolution in the West

It is the problem of the relations between structure and superstructures which must be accurately posed and resolved if the forces which are active in the history of a particular period are to be correctly analysed and the relation between them determined. Two principles must orient the discussion: 1. that no society sets itself tasks for whose accomplishment the necessary and sufficient conditions do not either already exist or are not at least beginning to emerge and develop; 2. that no society breaks down and can be replaced until it has developed all the forms of life which are implicit in its internal relations. From a reflection on these two principles, one can move on to develop a whole series of further principles of historical methodology. Meanwhile, in studying a structure, it is necessary to distinguish organic movements (relatively permanent) from movements which may be termed 'conjunctural' (and which appear as occasional, immediate, almost accidental). Conjunctural phenomena too depend on organic movements to be sure, but they do not have any very far-reaching historical significance; they give rise to political criticism of a minor, day-to-day character, which has as its subject small ruling groups and personalities with direct governmental responsibilities. Organic phenomena on the other hand give rise to socio-historical criticism, whose subject is wider social groupings — beyond the people with immediate responsibilities and beyond the ruling personnel. When a historical period comes to be studied, the great importance of this distinction becomes clear. A crisis occurs, sometimes lasting for decades. This exceptional duration means that incurable structural contradictions have revealed themselves (reached maturity), and that, despite this, the

political forces which are struggling to conserve and defend the existing structure itself are making every effort to cure them, within certain limits, and to overcome them. These incessant and persistent efforts (since no social formation will ever admit that it has been superseded) form the terrain of the 'conjunctural', and it is upon this terrain that the forces of opposition organize. These forces seek to demonstrate that the necessary and sufficient conditions already exist to make possible, and hence imperative, the accomplishment of certain historical tasks (imperative, because any falling short before a historical duty increases the necessary disorder, and prepares more serious catastrophes). (The demonstration in the last analysis only succeeds and is 'true' if it becomes a new reality, if the forces of opposition triumph; in the immediate, it is developed in a series of ideological, religious, philosophical, political and juridical polemics, whose concreteness can be estimated by the extent to which they are convincing, and shift the previously existing disposition of social forces.)

A common error in historico-political analysis consists in an inability to find the correct relation between what is organic and what is conjunctural. This leads to presenting causes as immediately operative which in fact only operate indirectly, or to asserting that the immediate causes are the only effective ones. In the first case there is an excess of 'economism', or doctrinaire pedantry; in the second, an excess of 'ideologism'. In the first case there is an overestimation of mechanical causes, in the second an exaggeration of the voluntarist and individual element. (The distinction between organic 'movements' and facts and 'conjunctural' or occasional ones must be applied to all types of situation; not only to those in which a regressive development or an acute crisis takes place, but also to those in which there is a progressive development or one towards prosperity, or in which the productive forces are stagnant.) The dialectical nexus between the two categories of movement, and therefore of research, is hard to establish precisely. Moreover, if this error is serious in historiography, it becomes still more serious in the art of politics, when it is not the reconstruction of past history but the construction of present and future history which is at stake. One's own desires and one's baser and more immediate passions are the cause of error, in that they take the place of an objective and impartial analysis — and this happens not as a conscious 'means' to stimulate to action, but as self-deception. In this case too the snake bites the charlatan — in other words the demagogue is the first victim of his own demagoguery.

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 great economic crises. A crisis cannot give the attacking forces the ability to organize with lightning speed in time and in space; still less can it endow them with fighting spirit. Similarly, the defenders are not demoralized, 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.^[2]

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 in the trade-union movement should be related to this series of problems.^[3]

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. The former had fallen at once, but unprecedented struggles had then ensued; in the case of the latter, the struggles would take place 'beforehand'.^[4] 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.

It should be seen whether Bronstein [Trotsky]'s famous theory about the *permanent* character of the movement^[5] 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 say that Bronstein, apparently 'Western', was in fact a cosmopolitan — i.e. superficially national and superficially Western or European. Ilyich [Lenin] on the other hand was profoundly national and profoundly European.

Ilyich, 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 the East 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's theory in the work translated by Alessandri. Rosa's pamphlet and theories anyway influenced the French syndicalists, as is clear from some of Rosmer's articles on Germany in *Vie Ouvriere* (first series in pamphlet form). It partly depends too on the theory of spontaneity.

The Transition from the War of Manoeuvre (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 offensive more openly against the oppositionists and organize 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 manoeuvre 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 mobilized. 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.